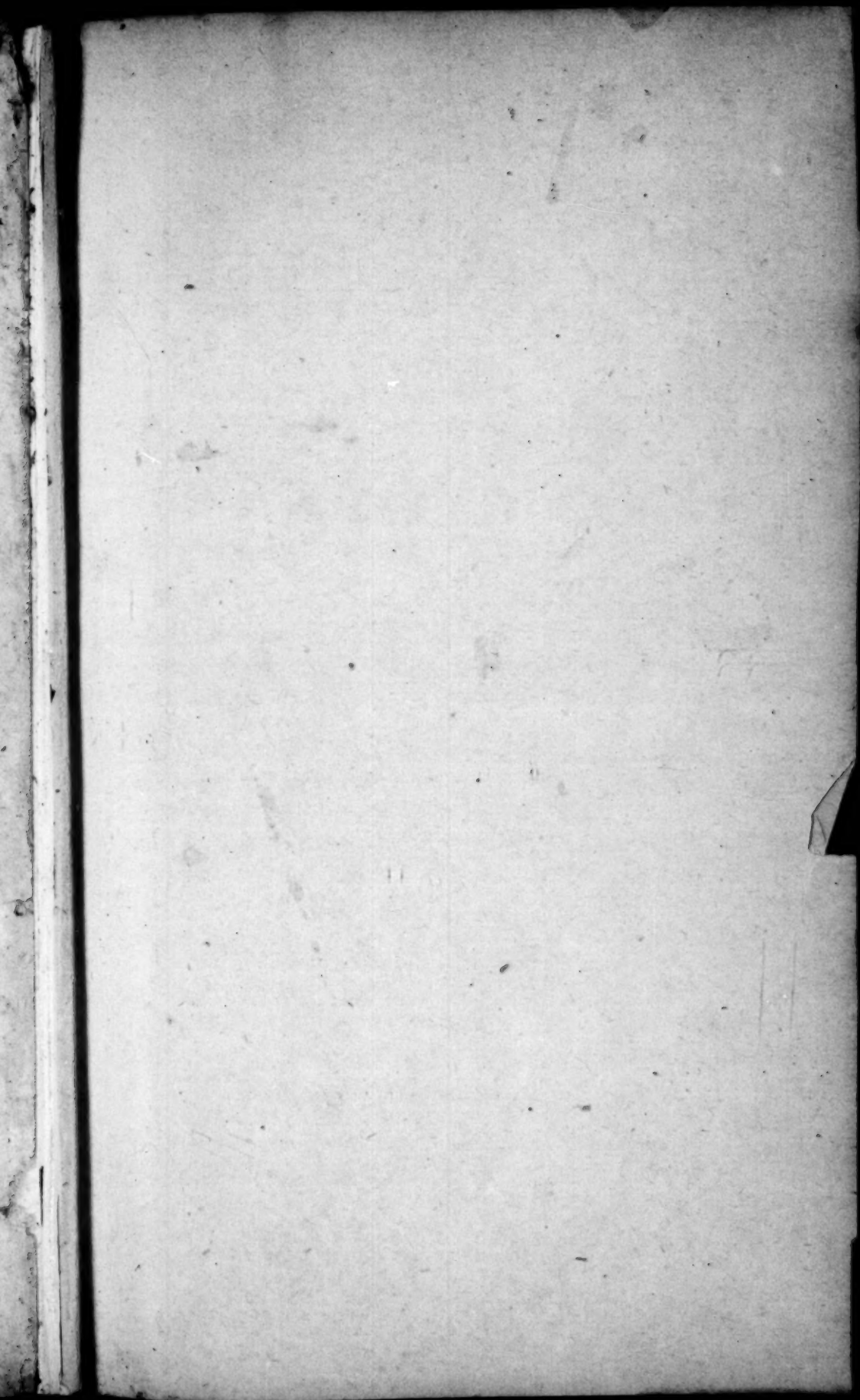




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ERMINA MONTROSE;

OR,

THE COTTAGE OF THE VALE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

WITH CHARACTERS FROM LIFE.

Yet Providence, that ever-waking eye,
Looks down with pity on the feeble toil
Of mortals lost to hope, and lights them safe
Thro' all this dreary labyrinth of fate.

THOMSON.

BY EMILY CLARK,

GRAND-DAUGHTER OF THE LATE COLONEL FREDERICK,

AND AUTHOR OF

"*IANTHE; OR, THE FLOWER OF CAERNARVON.*"

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

AND SOLD BY JAMES WALLIS, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1800.

BRITISH MUSEUM

OR

THE COLLEGE OF THE VALL

BY JAMES A. SMITH

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

THE COLLEGE OF THE VALL
IS A REMARKABLE
EXAMPLE OF THE
ART OF THE
MIDDLE AGES
AND IS WELL
WORTH A VISIT
TO THE
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**T. Davison,
White-Friars.**

1800

ERMINA MONTROSE.

CHAPTER I.

I once had parents—Ye endearing names !
How my torn heart with recollection bleeds !

GLOVER.

THE remainder of Ermina's journey passed without any occurrence worth relating, and she felt genuine pleasure spring to her heart at the expectation of soon meeting the amiable family of the Heywoods. It was a fine afternoon, when she entered the road that led to the village of Riversdale, which wound sweetly on the borders of the lake of Windermere ; and the sun, shining on the silver-grey rocks, and glistening through
VOL. II. B the

the green woods that hung on its banks, charmed her eye, as it likewise caught a distant view of the white parsonage-house furrounded with groves. Emotions of joy, mingled with a sad, but tender recollection of her father, at beholding the scene of her childish days of undisturbed happiness, raised a conflict in her bosom of painful and pleasing sensations. Soon, however, were these dispersed, when she witnessed the unfeigned satisfaction with which she was welcomed by her worthy friends ; who, forgetting the lapse of time, were astonished at the alteration her person had undergone, whilst she was no less surpris'd at Merelina's womanly appearance. She amused herself in talking over with the latter of the sports and amusements of former days ; and, in retracing those scenes of youthful delight, which a pure and uncorrupted mind must ever find pleasure in recalling to remembrance, Merelina received the highest gratification

gratification in shewing her all her favourite walks, and in pointing out the improvements that had been made. Most of the time Ermina spent at the parsonage was occupied in walking and riding ; for she had accepted the offer Mrs. Heywood made her, of remaining there till the cottage, which had been obliged to undergo some repairs, was perfectly proper for her reception.

When it became habitable, she took possession of it, and resumed her usual and most esteemed employments, which prevented ennui from stealing over her in the solitude to which she was destined when deprived of the society of the Heywoods. This unavoidably happened frequently, though she petitioned for their company as often as they could spare time to devote it to her ; and the sweetness of her manners, together with her intrinsic worth, made them never more

pleased than when associating with their sweet young friend: and Merelina and her mother would sometimes bring their work that they might sit with her the whole day, while she played on the harp, or read to them, as they worked. On those days that were particularly sultry, they retired to a beautiful cool recess in the garden, over which the finest trees waved their branches, and the sweetest shrubs perfumed the air, beneath whose leafy covert the feathered choristers warbled the most dulcet notes. At a little distance, you caught a glimpse from it, through the trees, of the beautiful lake of Windermere, on whose banks the wood that surrounded the cottage extended for some miles. The late Colonel Montrose had caused several paths to be cut through it, and in one part of the wood, where it rose like an amphitheatre to the top of a neighbouring hill, whence the lake and sweet secreted cot appeared
in

in the finest point of view. Above it ascended a rocky mountain, with yews and hollies growing, with a pleasing wildness, amongst its brown rocks ; whilst, to diversify this romantic scenery, there was seen a small island in the lake, where stood the ruins of an oratory, surrounded with coppice wood. The cottage of Montrose was thatched and neatly white-washed, the door and pales were painted green, while round its casements clung the woodbine and jessamine, almost luxuriantly creeping into them. Round the pillars of the porch, at the door, were entwined moss-roses and sweet-briar, which, after a shower of rain, filled the air with delicious fragrance, mingled with the aromatic perfume of the myrtle, which flourished to advantage in this sheltered spot, defended from the northern wind. The interior of the cottage was furnished with the utmost simplicity ; the curtains, chair-covers, &c. were composed of

white dimity trimmed with green fringe ; the chairs, bedsteads, and tables were painted green and white. The rooms, on the ground floor, consisted of a kitchen with offices, a small study and parlour. The first floor contained two bed-chambers and a break-fast room, which, from the charming prospect from the windows, and its having a distant view of the parsonage, became Ermina's favourite room, and here it was that she usually sat, when she drew, wrote, or practised her music. Her correspondence with her esteemed friends, sister Madelaine, Mrs. Helderton, and Lady Julia, engaged a great portion of her time : for, to the first of these ladies she opened the inmost recesses of her soul, and scarce a thought escaped her, but it was communicated to that beloved friend.

A few weeks after Ermina's residence at the cottage, she received visits from
different

different families who were resident at the village of Riversdale ; and, having been introduced to her at Mr. Heywood's, were so much charmed with her manners and appearance, that they wished to cultivate her acquaintance. This she would have avoided, as some of them were not in the least to her taste ; but it was difficult for her to have acted thus without appearing singular, and becoming the talk of a whole country village. The first invitation she, therefore, accepted, after having visited the squire's lady and other principal people, was to take tea with a Mrs. Busy, the widow of a wealthy tanner, who had a numerous family, consisting of six daughters and three sons. Mrs. Busy's origin was very mean, having been brought up to work in the fields, at hay making, &c. where she was seen by her late husband, who fell in love with her, and married her, as she was then a pretty girl and himself only a tanner's man,

having acquired his riches but a short time before his death. Till within a very few years, it was customary for Mrs. Busy to attend at the nearest town every market-day with leather, which she sold publicly. But, when riches flowed in upon them, the scene totally changed. The sons and daughters were sent to boarding-schools, where the girls soon learnt pride, vanity, and affectation, and to despise the smell of the tap-yard, though accustomed to it from their infancy. The mother, instead of checking, strengthened their folly, and thought no persons' children equal to her own in beauty or accomplishments, notwithstanding they were all (except the eldest daughter, who was a pleasing girl) the most artful, censorious, ignorant, and trifling young woman that ever existed. Their supreme pleasure was to propagate a tale of scandal, or to eclipse any of their rustic neighbours in dress; and a new fashion elated their vanity, and filled them

them with topics of conversation for a month.

Ermina repented a thousand times in the course of the evening having accepted Mrs. Busy's invitation from the fear of offending, as her language was extremely coarse, and her politeness quite oppressive. She dignified the evening's amusement with the appellation of a route, and the tea was sent in from the top of the staircase, where the eldest daughter sat making it, with the wind blowing strongly upon it, as it was a very stormy evening, which made the effluvia from the tan-yard more powerful. Mrs. Busy entered the room dropping her curtsies to all the company separately, followed by two of her youngest daughters, with clean starched frocks standing out like hoops, which they had outgrown, and which were half up their legs; and, being great girls, one fourteen,

teen, and the other fifteen, gave them a most awkward appearance. Their curtseys were as frequent as Mrs. Busy's, who sailed round the room with a train two yards upon the ground, her long ear-rings reaching down to her shoulders, and tied to her ears which had never been pierced, and with a fine long waist, which she valued herself upon for its smallness, though it had no regular proportion, but was one continued strait line. The Miss Busys crowded round Ermina to talk about the fashions, as they hoped to receive very interesting accounts from her, being so lately arrived from London, the grand emporium of fashion. They scrutinized her person and dress with such minute attention, that it was quite distressing to her; and, before she took her leave, they had requested the pattern of her gown and hat, to make similar ones for themselves. Ermina met several other characters in the course of the evening,

evening, which afforded her some diversion, as they were truly original, and to be met with no-where but in the country where ignorance flourishes, as in its native soil. From this period, Ermina avoided the society of Mrs. Busy's family as much as possible, though she could not shake them off entirely, as they were continually calling upon her, and appeared displeased that she would not associate with them, as often as they wished ; but she determined to be indifferent whether they were offended or not, as, the more she saw of them, the more they were her aversion. She sat in the same pew at church with them, and Mrs. Busy would, as often as " God and our Saviour " were mentioned, begin raising her eyes to heaven, distorting her countenance, and squeezing out hypocritical tears ; but, immediately after the service was ended, she would hasten home to scold her servants and criticise her neighbours.

In pleasures pure and undisturbed did Ermina's days glide gently on during the three months she had already passed at the cottage, and the tranquillity of her mind soon made the rose of health bloom again on her lovely cheek. The calm, in which her hours passed, reminded her of the peaceful abbey of St. Catherine's, except when the mournful recollection of her past sorrows and disappointments would, sometimes, on reflection, almost melt her soul to agony. But these painful ideas she always endeavoured to banish, and they rarely pervaded her breast, but when any little incident revived melancholy retrospections.

Merelina and Ermina became daily more attached, and were never satisfied if they did not see each other continually. Merelina had a sweet simplicity of manners, with such a fund of good-nature and vivacity as endeared her

her to all who knew her ; her beautiful black eyes sparkled with a lustre scarcely to be equalled, while the glossy ringlets of her dark brown hair fell luxuriantly round a face, in which the most sportive dimples played. She had left home for a week to visit some friends, and Ermina felt an excessive depression of spirits, which she attributed to her absence. Seated in the breakfast-room, overcome with melancholy reflections, a letter was brought to her, which she knew from the hand-writing came from Lady Julia, and which she opened with the expectation of being amused, as Lady Julia was an elegant and entertaining correspondent. But, imagine how much she was shocked and surprised, to find the first sentence that met her eye, was no other than the dreadful information, that the small property she possessed, which was in the hands of a banker, was entirely lost, as he had failed and fled to Amsterdam, leaving

leaving her destitute of every thing except the cottage and the grounds belonging to it. Lady Julia's letter was exceedingly kind, intreating Ermina to come and live with her, or if she declined it, to point out any method in which she could be of service. Little did our heroine expect that Lady Julia would have evinced so much friendship and affection, and it gratified her extremely, though the knowledge she had of her caprice prevented her from profiting by her ladyship's first offer. After consulting with her friends at the parsonage (who would have preferred her remaining with them, and placed her upon an equality with their own child), she wrote to Lady Julia, intreating her to enquire for an eligible situation for her as governess to two children of distinction, alleging as an excuse for not accepting her proposal of residing again with her, that she should disoblige her other friends
 who

who had made similar requests, and that she was likewise averse to eating the bread of dependence without doing something to merit it. She had written by the same post to Mrs. Helderton, desiring that she would also endeavour to procure a situation for her, and she doubted not with the assistance of these two friends, who had it so much in their power to serve her, that she would soon be enabled to gain herself a subsistence : for her heart revolted at the idea of parting with the cottage, which had been her father's favourite abode, till reduced to the last extremity. She intended to appropriate the salary she would receive to keeping the cottage in repair, and the grounds about it in order, as she knew her own personal expences would be very trifling, having a great quantity of elegant clothes which must prevent her purchasing any articles of dress for a long time.

Within

Within a shorter period than she could have expected, a letter arrived from Lady Julia, saying she had procured her a situation as governess to the daughters of Sir John Affop, who resided at Markham-hall, near Dulverston Priory, in Devonshire, which was Mrs. Helderton's country-seat. Ermina felt delighted at the prospect of being so near the last-mentioned lady, in whose friendship she promised herself much consolation, as the warmth of her professions had assured her of its sincerity, though she was rather surprised at having received no answer to her last letter; but unfavourable thoughts she rejected from her mind, convinced from experience that many circumstances frequently occurred to prevent punctuality in writing.

The fifth day from the receipt of Lady Julia's letter, Ermina fixed to begin her journey,

journey, as she had learnt from her that Lady Assop wished her to enter, as soon as possible, on her new employment ; and as Lady Julia was likewise desirous that she should come first to London, and pass a few days at her house before she went into Devonshire, it was necessary for her to lose as little time as possible.

The evening before Ermina left Riverdale, she strolled into the wood to take a last adieu of each beloved object ; and, deeply impressed with sorrow at being again an outcast from that valued home, she raised her weeping eyes in silent anguish to heaven. The setting sun gilded the mountain tops with soft refulgence, while the rising moon reflected its silver rays on the surface of the lake. All around was calm and still, and scarce a breeze shook the trees, or ruffled the smooth waters ; and Ermina, seating herself on the decayed stump of an old oak
beneath

beneath a willow, whose branches dipped into the stream below, felt the violence of her grief softened by the sweetness and serenity of the scene; and, pensively leaning her head on her hand, the tears gently stole down her cheeks. She had not long indulged in this luxurious sadness, when she was startled by hearing her own name echoing through the wood. She instantly arose, and, as the sound approached nearer, she recognised the voice of Terefe, to whom she immediately hastened, and discovered the faithful creature in the greatest apprehension lest some accident should have happened to her, from having walked out alone so late in the evening. Ermina found a repast prepared for her of fruits and cream, with some other delicacies, but her heart was too full to partake of them; and they remained untouched, to the great disappointment of Terefe, who had hoped it would please her dear mistress,

mistress, as it was the last night of her supping there.

The sun had for some time darted its rays through the casements of her room, ere Ermina awoke from her sleep, in which she had gained a transitory oblivion of her cares. She hastily dressed herself, and hurried to the breakfast-room, where she expected to find Mr. Heywood with his wife and Merelina, who had promised to be with her very early. As she expected, she found them waiting for her to begin breakfast, and after almost a silent meal, caused by sorrow at the approaching separation, Ermina flung herself, after affectionately embracing them more dead than alive, into the carriage. Terefe had clung about her mistress, and affected her almost to agony by her violent expressions of grief at parting from her, and intreating to be suffered to accompany her; but,

but, finding her requests unavailing, she at length consented to remain at the parsonage till more reconciled to the loss of her beloved lady, and better calculated to undertake another place.

CHAPTER II.

Oh, what a world is this ! when what is comely
Envenoms him that wears it !

SHAKSPEARE.

ERMINA proceeded on her journey absorbed in melancholy reflections. She staid two days in London with Lady Julia, and then set off for Markham-hall, where she arrived without meeting with any striking incident. Her spirits were renovated by the charming reception she received from Lady Assop, who was exceedingly affable and good-humoured. The family consisted of Sir John and Lady Assop, Miss Diana Assop, a maiden sister of Sir John's, and their two daughters, Louisa and Georgiana.

The

The eldest child was five, and the youngest three years of age, and both possessed of excellent dispositions ; and, as they soon became very fond of their new governess, she attached herself insensibly to them.

Three weeks had elapsed since Ermina's residence at Markham-hall, without her having heard or seen any thing of Mrs. Helderton, though Dulverston Priory was but four miles distant from her present abode. How to account for her silence and neglect she knew not, and formed a thousand conjectures on the subject. At length, imagining that it might probably proceed from some mistake in the receiving of her letters, she determined to make her a visit the first leisure moment she could command. One afternoon, therefore, when Lady Assop took the children out with her for a ride, she seized the advantage of this opportunity to accomplish her design, and
walked

walked to the Priory. The day was excessively sultry, and when she arrived there, she felt completely fatigued. Enquiring for Mrs. Helderton, she learnt that she was engaged at her toilet, and was shewn into a parlour to wait till that lady could come to her; and here, to her great astonishment, Ermina beheld seated, reading near the window, the same officer whom she had met in the stage-coach.

They mutually smiled at the singularity of the circumstance, and entered into conversation, which agreeably beguiled the moments, that must otherwise have been tedious, till Mrs. Helderton made her appearance, who had thought proper to make Ermina wait an hour and a half, while she was dressing. But she would have been more expeditious, had she suspected Miss Montrose was enjoying the society of such a charming companion as her

her cousin Sir Charles Melrofs, who she concluded was gone out a-riding, as he generally did about that hour. Ermina had been rather surpris'd at the ceremony now observed by Mrs. Helderton, who formerly always desired her to walk up to her dressing-room, when engaged there; but she ceased to wonder at the loss of that friendly familiarity that once reigned between them, when she perceived the chilling civility with which she now accosted her, and that no one expression of pleasure or satisfaction fell from her lips on seeing her, and learning she was resident at so short a distance from the Priory; nor did she attempt any apology for neglecting her letters, or even press her to repeat her visits.

In short, her manners were totally changed, and Ermina, immediately imputing the alteration to her present poverty and dependent state, arose almost
instantly

instantly to depart, without any opposition from Mrs. Helderton, when Sir Charles intreated permission to escort her home. This politeness she would have willingly declined, could she have done so with propriety, as she saw it was displeasing to his cousin, who frowned through the redundant curls of her wig that nearly obscured her eyes: for our heroine perceived with astonishment, that the afflicted widow had already thrown aside her cap, and purchased a light brown wig, which formed a hideous contrast to her swarthy complexion.

Sir Charles, whose penetration made him easily discern her discontent, was not to be dissuaded, by her cross and haughty glances, from attending Ermina to Markham-hall. He was in much better health and spirits than when she first saw him, and so lively and rational, that it divested her mind of the unpleasant impression

VOL. II. c caused

caused by Mrs. Helderton's rude conduct, and she felt less sensible of her fatiguing walk. On taking his leave he requested permission to wait on her again. This she could not, consistently with politeness, refuse; though, situated as she was, she would rather have declined all visitors to herself, notwithstanding she could with ease receive them, as Lady Asfop had with great good-nature appropriated an apartment entirely for her use, in which she might receive her own friends and acquaintance. It was a small pretty room on the ground floor, which looked into a beautiful shrubbery, filled with the most rare and odoriferous shrubs, intermixed with innumerable orange-trees in green tubs, which filled the air with delicious fragrance.

Sir Charles took advantage of the permission she had granted him, and was her frequent visitor, sometimes (but very rarely)

rarely) bringing with him an invitation from Mrs. Helderton, which, however, she never accepted, but when necessitated to accompany Lady Assop, as a slight intimacy existed between her and the former lady. On these occasions, Ermina was generally received with pointed rudeness; but the attentive tenderness of Sir Charles shielded her from feeling too forcibly the effects of Mrs. Helderton's ill-breeding, as he possessed the most humane and generous heart, and compassionated the unfortunate, unprotected situation of so young and beautiful a woman. She soon discovered, to her extreme regret, that her cruel enemy endeavoured to prejudice Lady Assop and Miss Diana against her; but though her machinations had little influence on the amiable mind of the good-natured Lady Assop, on Miss Diana it acted very differently, who, passionately fond of every species of defamation, eagerly gave credit

to the most improbable and malicious reports; for scandal and eating were the supreme joys of her life, and she would have sacrificed any thing for a good dinner, or the history of some unfortunate female's loss of reputation: and innumerable were the insults Ermina received from her, which she would have found it difficult to endure, had not Lady Assop continued unalterably kind.

Though Mrs. Helderton would have always considered it quite unnecessary to shew any attention to such a girl as Ermina, now that she was dependent and deprived of fortune, yet would she have been less an object of violent dislike, had she not innocently rivalled her in the affection of Lord Henry Beauchamp and Sir Charles Melrofs; for, on both of these gentlemen, she had, since her widowhood, formed designs. By one of those capricious chances, in which fortune delights,

lights, a friend of Lord Henry's and Mrs. Helderton's told her in confidence (unsuspecting her designs), of the hold Ermina still had on his affections, notwithstanding he was convinced of her unworthiness, though in what manner she had improperly acted Lord Henry would never tell his friend. Enraged, that she should be slighted for this insignificant girl (as she styled her), she vowed to do every thing in her power to mortify her, whilst the lovely, persecuted daughter of Montrose was ignorant of the tumult she had occasioned in her rancorous bosom. Mrs. Helderton finding therefore from this account, what she had already began to fear, that it was impossible to make any impression on Lord Henry's heart, began an attack on her cousin Sir Charles. But here again this dreaded rival appeared to interfere in her views, as his growing passion was perceptible to every one except the object for whom he sighed,

who was alone unconscious of the love she had created.

One fine warm evening, when the children were retired to rest, Ermina stole gently down stairs, and crossing through the hall to her own apartment, opened the glass door which led into the shrubbery, which she walked, and passed lightly over the lawn to a favourite walk, which was a long avenue of trees by the side of a canal, at the end of which was an elegant alcove, where she frequently delighted to seat herself, as she now did. Here a pleasing languor stole over her senses, and the momentary indolence she felt reminded her of Lord Henry's verses to idleness, which she amused herself by repeating aloud, as every thing that had met her eye of his writing was engraven on her heart.

TO IDLENESS.

Goddeſs of eaſe, leave Lethe's brink,

Obſequious to the muſe and me,

For once endure the pain to think,

Oh ſweet Inſenſibility !—

Siſter of Peace and Indolence,

Bring muſe, bring numbers, ſoft and flow,

Elaborately void of ſenſe,

And, ſweetly thoughtleſs, let them flow.

Near ſome ſweet cowſlips-painted mead

There always let me paſs my hours ;

And under me let Flora ſpread

A carpet of her choiceſt flowers :

Where, Philomel, your notes you breathe

Forth from behind the neighbouring pine ;

And murmurs of the ſtream beneath

Still flow in uniſon with thine.

For thee, O Idleneſs, the woes

Of life we patiently endure :

Thou art the ſource whence labour flows ;

We ſhun thee but to make thee ſure.

For who'd sustain war's toils of waste ?

Or who, the roaring, billowy sea ?

But to be idle at the last,

And find all pleasure end in thee.

The dews of eve that bathed the various fragrant plants and odoriferous shrubs that furrounded the spot where she was, diffused a sweet refreshing perfume, which, added to the general stillness that reigned amidst the shades of night, lulled her mind into calm repose. The images of those she loved, and had cruelly lost, presented themselves to her imagination in the most pleasing forms, and she pictured to herself that they beheld her conduct and sufferings with approbation. "Alas!" she mentally exclaimed, "though unrelenting fate persecute and tear from me all that my soul holds dear, yet have I the soothing consolation of preserving a heart unsullied with guilt, though not free from error, and this bosom can boast of moments of happiness which the conscience

science of those who injure me will not suffer them to enjoy, and of which they cannot deprive me, poor and dependent as I am." She continued to indulge these reflections both pleasing and painful, sensations that in susceptible minds often accompany the recollection of past scenes, chequered with a variety of joys and sorrows, till the evening became far advanced. Finding the air rather cool, from having no other covering but a thin lace cloak, she returned to the house for a shawl in which she intended to wrap herself, and again seated in the alcove, to view from thence the pensive gloom of night now and then dispersed by the pale moon, which, stealing from behind the clouds, threw a soft light through the foliage of the trees, and made her want resolution to quit this tranquil pleasant scene, as it softened, though it did not banish, disagreeable retrospections.

With a slow musing pace, that proceeded from an unwillingness to return, she walked towards the house; and, as she moved round an angle which led to the shrubbery, the sound of her own name, repeated by a female voice, drew her attention, and by an almost involuntary movement her steps were arrested. She remained nearly motionless, not daring to proceed any farther, from the fear of being overheard, as she felt an irresistible impulse of curiosity (though she blamed herself for indulging it) to discover who were the persons that conversed so earnestly about her. Soon, however, she recognised the voices of Fanny the nursery-maid, and Bridget Mrs. Helderton's waiting-woman. "You may say what you please in her praise," said the latter, "but I am sure she is as proud and overbearing a minx as ever I set my eyes on. Well, and to be sure if she is a gentleman's daughter,

daughter, she is poor, which makes her no better than myself; nay, not so good neither; for I have much better clothes than she has, or, perhaps, ever will have, and may be married any day in the week; for there's Mr. Pompadour, Lord Swine's butler, would have me at any time, and a power of money he has to be sure. But, I'faith! your fine Miss Montrose will be, if she is not already, no better than she should be; for, without a penny of fortune, who do you think will marry her? No, no, as my lady says, none of your Birminghams, none of your false money. Sir Charles may amuse himself with her as a mistress, but she will never be any thing more honourable to him. For my part," continued Bridget, "if I was such a noble, handsome, rich gentleman as Sir Charles (for he is certainly a fine man, though a little marked with the small-pox), I would never take up with other people's hangers-on. Ha! ha! my
c 6 lady

lady and me know a good plan for that, for we will die before he shall marry her." Here she paused to recover breath, and Fanny rejoined, laughing, " Now you have had your clack out, I hope you'll let me put in my oar. Pray, Mrs. Bridget, what makes Mrs. Helderton hate Miss Montrose so? I should like to know the reason of it." " Reason, indeed! why I believe my lady never does any thing without reason. Only to think now, that this nasty wicked Miss Montrose enticed away my dear lady's lover Lord Henry Beauchamp, when he was in France. She spent almost all his fortune, and then ran away with another gentleman, whom she intrigued with beforehand, which broke her poor father's heart. There's a wicked hussy for you, when she knew my lady was engaged to Lord Henry, and that they had loved one another from children, and the poor gentleman, who was as beautiful a man as

ever

ever the sun shone on, is now wasting to a shadow: for nobody thinks he'll live, it hurts him so, to think of her bad conduct; and I am sure I wonder such a good woman as your mistress keeps the naughty creature in her house. Now you can't be surpris'd, that my lady hates her; and then to think, that she should make Sir Charles in love with her too! I do believe her to be a witch." "Oh! the wicked wretch!" screamed out Fanny, "I shall not be able to bear the sight of her again. I used to admire her, when she smiled so sweetly, and spoke so pretty, saying, 'My good Mrs. Fanny do this, and my good Mrs. Fanny do that.' Lord! I shall expect she will shew her cloven foot." "But, bless my stars!" cried Bridget, "I must be jogging, for it will be very late, as it is, before I get to the Priory. Do come and take a cup of tea with me soon, and we will talk over these matters again together, but, mum! be as close as wax." They wished each other good

good-night, and Bridget had just opened the park gate, when she turned back, saying, with a horse laugh, " I hope miss hasn't heard us; for you know you told me she is always straying about on these moon-light nights; but I judge it is to look at something more than the moon, for our Sir Charles is as fond as her of moon-light walks." With this charitable speech they parted; Bridget to the Priory, and Fanny returned to the house, leaving Ermina stupified with what she had heard.

When they were out of hearing, she proceeded with as much speed as her trembling limbs would permit her to her own apartment, where, after having remained a few minutes to recover her perturbation, and excuse herself to Lady Allop for not attending the supper table, she retired to her own bed-chamber, as the sweet serenity of her mind was destroyed

destroyed by the events of the evening ; she
 knelt down by the bedside, where her
 little favourite Georgiana (who slept with
 her) was fast asleep ; she contemplated
 her sweet, innocent face, which she
 bathed with the tears that dropped im-
 perceptibly from her eyes. “ Happy
 days ! ” she exclaimed ; “ how much to be
 regretted when I was like you, sweet in-
 nocent, unconscious of care ! Fled are
 ye, alas ! oh days of happiness, for ever !
 What misery to live under such compli-
 cated wretchedness, the sport of the ma-
 lice and machinations of those whose an-
 ger and revenge I never provoked ! ” She
 would have remained all night in this
 situation, overwhelmed with sorrow and
 despair, if the light and sound of her sobs
 had not awakened the child, who, open-
 ing her sweet blue eyes, threw her little
 arms around her neck. Hastily undress-
 ing herself, Ermina found in her sweet
 caresses a momentary oblivion of her grief,
 and

and they sunk together into a sweet refreshing slumber.

When she awoke the next morning, she considered the occurrences of the preceding evening as a disagreeable dream, so difficult did she find it to believe that such wickedness as Mrs. Helderton's really existed. But it was not the scandalous aspersions of either that lady or her colleague Bridget that distressed her so much, as the intelligence of Lord Henry's dangerous state of health, though she could not possibly conceive after the treatment she had received from him, that she could be any way accessory to it, unless caused by remorse for his inconstancy towards her. But she endeavoured to hope that the whole was a fabrication of Mrs. Helderton's malevolent brain, to render her detestable in the eyes of the world; and though she suffered severely from the scandal she had invented, she

trusted

trusted to time to develope her injuries, and comforted herself in the knowledge of her own innocence. But again, the fear that Lord Henry was really ill, perhaps dying, vanquished her fortitude, and she felt agony unspeakable. He knew not, she, sighing, reflected that she still loved him, and regretted the hours of pure felicity which they had enjoyed together. She passed the day, overwhelmed with a grief she could not conquer, confining herself to her own apartment under pretence of a violent head-ache, which deception her heavy eyes and dejected countenance sufficiently favoured, when she encountered Miss Diana's scrutinising looks, who, under pretence of anxiety for her health, came frequently to observe her, making it a plea for her intrusion.

The violence of Ermina's sorrow was subdued on the following day, as she had
reasoned

reasoned with herself, and was quite chagrined at her own want of fortitude, resolving in future to check her sensibility. Her spirits being somewhat renovated, she took her work and seated herself near the window in her little room, that by employment she might divert her thoughts, whilst the children were with Lady Assop. The sound of an approaching footstep made her look up, and, surprised, she beheld Sir Charles advancing through the shrubbery, who kissed his hand to her, and opening the glass door, entered in. He seemed much affected at viewing her pale countenance, which bore evident marks of the grief that had oppressed her; and, with a look expressive of fond anxiety, in the most tender accents enquired if she was ill. The affectionate solicitude of his manner, and the tender interest he appeared to have for her welfare, which was now too evident to be mistaken, all conspired to remind

mind her so forcibly of the malicious insinuations of Bridget, that she was quite affected; and in spite of every effort to suppress her emotion, she burst into tears.

Thrown entirely off his guard at witnessing the distressing situation of such a beloved object, Sir Charles flung himself at her feet, and avowing the ardour of his passion, confessed that his person and fortune were at her disposal. She received this unexpected declaration with confusion and uneasiness, yet mingled with a degree of pleasure at being beloved by so valuable a character, but the preference she still felt for Lord Henry (though his conduct had lessened her affection) made her feel averse to giving her hand to another. While these reflections floated in her mind, Sir Charles intreated to know his doom. Trembling and irresolute from a conflict of contending emotions, she besought him to spare her

her for the present on a subject, which, being wholly unprepared for, she found it difficult to converse upon, and begged him to leave her. Fearful of offending, Sir Charles obeyed her wishes, hoping every thing favourable from her confusion and perturbation; but he first obtained permission to call in a few days to hear his fate.

When Sir Charles had quitted her, Ermina revolved in her mind every circumstance that had passed, and it was not till after a severe conflict in her mind betwixt love for Lord Henry and esteem for Sir Charles, that she at length prevailed with herself to consent to an union with the latter. How truly generous she considered him in raising her without hesitation, poor and unfortunate as she was, to that affluence her birth had indeed entitled her to expect, but which her late misfortunes seemed to exclude her

her for ever from enjoying. She consoled herself with the delightful idea that she should again have it in her power to indulge those charitable propensities, implanted by nature in her benevolent breast, be enabled to have her faithful Terese restored to her, and evince her gratitude to those worthy beings that had not neglected her in the hour of adversity.

These consolatory reflections reconciled her in some degree to the necessity of now banishing the remembrance of Lord Henry from her mind, and wounded pride and scorned affection softened the pang that must otherwise have rent her susceptible heart at for ever resigning the first object of her choice. The fortitude she displayed on this occasion was highly honourable to her, and Sir Charles, when he again paid his devoirs, found her every thing his warmest wishes could desire ;
and,

and elated with the favourable reception he had received, he expressed himself enraptured with her goodness. This grateful tenderness in her lover assisted to reconcile Ermina still more to the conduct she had observed, and she hoped, in the contemplation of his felicity, to ascertain her own.

Sir Charles, who wished to make no secret of the proposal he had made Ermina, being completely master of his own actions, communicated the event of them to Sir John and Lady Assop, who felt overjoyed at her expected happiness and good fortune, so much had her amiable qualities endeared her to their hearts: for the arrows of Mrs. Helder-ton's malevolence had glanced beyond them, and done her scarcely any injury. Hitherto she had always been treated with the utmost deference and respect; but as the affianced bride of Sir Charles

Melrofs,

Melrofs, they confidered her more as their own daughter than as a dependent, and prevailed with her to let her marriage be celebrated at their houfe. Miss Dy, now the prospect of her aggrandizement became publicly known, laid aside the haughty condescension with which she had always behaved, and endeavoured to atone for her past conduct by the most ridiculous and troublesome attentions. No longer the deserted and insulted Ermina, all her prospects were brightening, every face that welcomed her was dressed in smiles, and the certainty of her becoming Sir Charles's wife protected her from the enemies her beauty, virtue, and accomplishments, had raised amongst the envious and ill-natured of her sex.

But with so much happiness in view, Ermina had still moments of refined misery, which she had hoped to escape ;
for,

for, alas! the tender attentions of Sir Charles reminded her of those she had received from Lord Henry, when her revered father smiled complacently on their union, the first wish of his soul. So deeply rooted in a mind of sensibility is the early attachments of our youth, that year rolls after year without effacing the impression.

Mrs. Helderton beheld with secret malice the approaching good fortune of the lovely descendant of the brave Montrose, yet she endeavoured to appear rejoiced at it; but danger lurked beneath her smiles, and envy rankled in her heart.

CHAPTER III.

Call not to my distracted mind, how good,
 How bright, she once appeared. Time was, indeed,
 When, blest in her chaste love, I fondly thought
 My soul possessed of all that earth held fair
 And amiable: but memory of past bliss
 Augments the bitter pangs of present woe!

DODSLEY.

IT was now the latter end of October,
 and the country, beginning to assume a
 wintry aspect, induced Sir John and Lady
 Assop to think of returning to town, more
 especially as their wishes coincided with
 the inclination of Sir Charles, who was
 anxious to be united to Ermina, as she
 had consented to the marriage taking
 place a few weeks after they arrived in

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D

London.

London. Urged by him to hasten their departure, and tired of the country, which had lost its principal charms, they determined immediately to leave it, though secretly against Ermina's wishes, as she was so partial to the country, that even in winter she thought it preferable to the metropolis; but she could make no objection, as she found her friends' inclinations were not congenial to her own.

A few days previous to their intended journey, Ermina strolled into a beautiful wood belonging to Sir John, situated nearly two miles distant from Markham-hall, to take a last adieu of its fading foliage. She was walking pensively along, when a voice addressing her by the appellation of " My pretty lady," made her look round, to see whence it proceeded. She started, on beholding almost at her elbow a gipsy woman, who had suddenly advanced from behind a bush that concealed

cealed her, whilst, through an opening in the trees, she almost at the same moment perceived a gang of them seated on the grass.

“ Cross my hand with a piece of silver, pretty young lady,” said the gipsy, “ and I will tell your fortune, and of great good luck that is going to befall you. You are come of a good family, and never did any thing to bring shame on yourself. There are two gentlemen in love with you. Cross my hand with a piece of silver, and I’ll tell you whether your lover is short or tall, whether he’s fair or dark, whether you’ve been in his company lately, and of great good luck that you will meet with.” Ermina smiled at what she knew to be the usual cant of the gipsies, having met with some of these people before; but feeling alarmed at being alone, and unprotected in this solitary spot with such companions, she thought it most

D 2

prudent

prudent to humour her, and presented her with a shilling to tell her fortune.

The gipsy took hold of her hand, whose delicate whiteness formed a striking contrast to the brown hue of her own; but at the very instant she was beginning her ridiculous jargon, she was joined by another of the tribe, remarkably tall, who said in a low voice, "Go, go, let me tell the lady's fortune; it shall be with as much truth, as that I now take hold of her white hand," at that moment seizing it, whilst the other relinquishing it, retreated immediately. Ermina at this conduct and address was almost sinking to the earth with apprehension: for she thought the whole gang would presently surround her, and her surprise increased, when the tall gipsy said: "Ah sweet lady, there is a gentleman whom you first saw over the seas, who loved you better than life; but, poor man! he was told by
wicked

wicked people that you was false-hearted, and pined himself to a skeleton. But now that he finds you had enemies, and was true to him, though going to be married to another, from thinking he no longer loved you, he swears he will not live to see you the wife of any man but himself." As the gipsy pronounced these remarkable words, Ermina, who from terror had before scarcely looked at her, surprised and shocked at what she said, raised her eyes, and regarding her with great earnestness, perceived that she appeared in the utmost agitation, her lips quivering when she attempted to speak.

Astonished at a circumstance so extraordinary, she examined her face with more curiosity; and, imagine her surprise and horror at discovering the pretended gipsy to be no other than Lord Henry in disguise: for, though the walnut-dye had indeed at first deceived her, and his fine

dark blue eyes (which looked almost like black) assisted the deception, yet was his image too deeply impressed on her heart, for him to conceal himself any length of time from her penetration. Overcome with the terror she had suffered, and a thousand indescribable emotions at seeing him, she sunk inanimate into his arms that were extended to receive her; and, when she recovered, found herself alone with Lord Henry, who had thrown off his disguise, and was supporting her.

She disengaged herself from his embrace, which he permitted her to do with a sigh, and then, eagerly grasping her hand, intreated her in the most moving terms to remain till she had heard a justification of his conduct. With much apparent difficulty, but secret inclination, Ermina was persuaded to listen to him; and, seating themselves on the trunk of an old tree that had been lately felled, Lord
Henry

Henry began, while his lovely mistress, confused and agitated, attended to him.

“ After I had quitted all that my soul held dear,” said Lord Henry (stealing a glance of melancholy tenderness at her), “ the only consolation I expected to receive was frequent letters from you. Judge, then, how severe must be my disappointment, when, after the most anxious expectation, arrived a letter apparently written in great haste, with a coldness and carelessness, and in the style that was quite opposite to what I imagined you would have written, after the hopes you had condescended to let me entertain. I answered it, however, with the warmth of unaltered love ; but expressed my fears of having displeased you. Yet, to this letter, and several other subsequent ones, I received no answer. Agonized by disappointed affection, I was uncertain how to act. If you no longer

loved me, as I had reason to fear, by applying to Colonel Montrose, my valued friend, I knew he would oblige you to accept my hand, as his nice sense of honour would not endure, after what had passed, that you should refuse to become my wife, yet I dreaded by such a method to draw upon you his displeasure, nor could I endure to be possessed of your person unless it was likewise accompanied with your heart. With all these doubts and apprehensions I still, however, continued to flatter myself that I was yet dear to you, fondly suggesting your neglect might probably arise from some false representation of my own conduct; but on no enemy who knew of my attachment to you could my suspicions rest. Whilst I was thus bewildered by various conjectures, the newspapers informed me of the death of a Colonel Montrose who had died in France, where he had lately resided for the recovery of his

his health. Shocked to the soul, as I concluded from the precarious state of health in which I had left him, and of which he continued to give me in his letters very unfavourable accounts, that it could be no other than my friend, I paid an unfeigned tribute of sorrow to his memory, and regretted the forlorn afflicted condition of you, my beloved Ermina, whom, I now more eagerly than ever wished to call mine. The Chateau de Valcour could no longer, I considered, be a proper residence for you; yet, indisposed as I knew you must be, from the shock of losing a parent so dear to you, I dreaded lest you should be incapable of travelling for a length of time. I hesitated not a moment to write to you, my Ermina, offering all the consolation in my power to soften your affliction; and, with the utmost tenderness informed you, that in five or six weeks I should embark for France, and if I found your sentiments the same

as formerly, acknowledge you publicly as my intended wife, notwithstanding that by such a measure I must incur the certain displeasure of my father Lord Darlington, whom I had sounded on the subject, and found utterly averse to my forming an union with any lady whose fortune was trifling; but these obstacles, and even others still more insurmountable, could not have prevented my flying to you, if a circumstance (which happened at a time when I was chagrined at finding my last letter share the same fate as the former ones) had not staggered my faith, as it must have done that of the least credulous person.

“ Lord Darlington, who is exceedingly partial to foreigners, and is visited by a great number, introduced me one day to the Baron de Belmont, who was just arrived from the continent. He was between thirty and forty years of age, a tall,
fine

fine figure; his manners were elegant, his conversation was lively and sensible : he had visited every country in Europe, and been received in the first circles. After chatting some time concerning the manners, customs, &c. of the different nations he had seen, the discourse at length turned on female beauty, and I brought the baron into a confession that he thought the English women handsomer than those of any other European nation. ‘ It was,’ continued he, ‘ in Languedoc that I lately beheld one of the most lovely creatures that I believe ever existed, with manners likewise as refined and fascinating as her person is beautiful. She is a countrywoman of yours, Lord Henry, and I could not avoid regretting, as with admiration I viewed her, that her mind is not as pure as her person is enchanting ; yet it would be impossible to imagine, from the apparent modesty of her appearance, and the delicacy of her conduct,

that she is engaged in an intrigue with one of the most libertine characters France ever produced!’ ‘ ’Tis, indeed, much to be lamented,’ I replied, ‘ that with so much beauty, an equal portion of virtue should not be united ; but may I ask (for I suppose it no secret) the name of this frail fair one?’ ‘ If I recollect right,’ said the baron, ‘ it is Montrose ; but I know to a certainty that her lover is styled the Count de Valcour.’ ‘ Just heaven!’ I exclaimed, agonized at this horrid intelligence, whilst my countenance betrayed the greatest emotion. Surprised at witnessing my agitation, he asked if I was acquainted with the lady. To this question I replied in the negative, endeavouring to conceal my confusion by some plausible excuse, and he took no farther notice of it. But from that moment my misery was sealed, having no reason to doubt de Belmont’s veracity, or suppose him any way interested
in

in the affair : for on my carelessly, some time after, making more enquiries on the subject, I found he had been but once in your company, and never seen de Valcour, the knowledge of whose character he had obtained from common report.

“ I now attributed your neglect of me to a passion for my rival ; and rage, jealousy, and contempt for your depraved conduct and infidelity, seized complete possession of my soul, whilst I vowed never voluntarily to see or speak to you again, and thus place it beyond your power to deceive me by that artful appearance of sweetness and integrity. Supported by the recollection of your falsehood, I strove to tear your image from my injured bosom, but painful was the effort, and severe the struggle betwixt love and anger ; and I sometimes indulged the flattering hope that the baron had been misinformed. These conflicts became, too,
more

more frequent after your return to England, when I heard you were under the protection of so respectable a character as Lady Julia Vernon ; but I checked my wish to excuse and see you, with the reflection, that such consummate art as yours might have deceived her ladyship, as well as myself, with the idea of your being amiable and good. Impressed with this false opinion of your virtue, we met at Ranelagh, and, oh God! what a meeting! Never shall I forget the pangs it cost me to refrain from catching you in my arms, and a thousand times have begged your forgiveness for believing any thing injurious of you, so lovely and innocent did you appear. But, egregious fool that I was! when I perceived you in mourning, instead of recollecting that for your father you wore it, I imagined it was to my rival's memory you paid this tribute of affection (for of de Valcour's death I had been informed), and

jealousy

jealousy made me resist every impulse I felt to a reconciliation. 'No!' I mentally exclaimed, 'I will not be made the convenient dupe of an ungrateful woman, who thinks, perhaps, from the power she once had over me, to ensnare me into a marriage, by which she hopes to heal her wounded reputation.' Thus the dread of being made a complete tool, steeled my heart to persevere in the mask of indifference I had assumed; and soon after what I deemed our unfortunate rencontre, I left London, and made a tour, to divert my mind from unpleasant retrospections, to the lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland.

"With the beauties of the lake of Windermere I was particularly enchanted, and the more fully to enjoy its beauties and the magnificent, sublime scenes in its environs, I lodged at a farm-house that was situated on the borders of the lake.

From

From thence I made excursions on horseback, and more frequently by water, which I found delightful, as I could indulge myself uninterruptedly in solitude, of which I was grown extravagantly fond. One day when I had taken a longer ride than usual, I penetrated into a thick wood which led to a beautiful valley, the sweetest and most secreted I ever beheld. A pretty, neat cottage, seen under a grove of fine trees, had a charming effect, and a broken cliff over it, with a ridge of hanging woods on the opposite side, made one of the most agreeable rural scenes in nature. As I stood admiring the pleasing landscape, a female figure advanced towards me through the valley, and, as she approached nearer, I recognised her with astonishment for your faithful Terese, who immediately knew and curtsied to me. Dismounting from my horse, which I fastened to a tree, I entered into conversation with her ; but my first enquiry was
after

after you, and if you were in Westmoreland. At this question the affectionate creature burst into tears, and was so much affected, that for some minutes she could with difficulty articulate. When a little recovered, she said, 'Walk with me to that cottage, my lord, and I will explain every thing that has happened to my dear mistress since you unfortunately left France, and abandoned the sweetest lady that ever was in the world. But, thank God! she will now be restored to that grandeur and riches which she deserves, and I hope will make her happy.' Perplexed in what manner to unravel the mystery of these words, I eagerly followed her to the cottage, which I now discovered to be yours: for, in the distraction of my mind, I had forgotten to have heard you mention that you had a residence in Westmoreland. I admired the simple elegance with which the cottage was furnished, and the drawings that ornamented the

ed the parlour; sad memorials to me of the woman I had once almost loved to idolatry, but from whose faulty conduct I had been compelled by honour to resign her! yet the words of Tereſe inſpired a faint hope, and I waited impatiently for an explanation. But, oh heavens! when ſhe related in thoſe ſimple unadorned terms, which ſo forcibly convey the truth, the various miſeries and miſfortunes in which you had been involved by the treachery and deceit of your worthleſs enemies, I execrated my credulity and unfeeling behaviour, reflecting with remorse that I ought, before I had condemned, to have heard your juſtification, and enabled you to defend yourſelf againſt every calumnious aſperſion. My anguiſh might, however, have been rather ſoftened, as I had hoped from the gentleneſs of your heart, that you would grant me your forgiveneſs, when informed I was the victim of deception, had not Tereſe acquainted

acquainted me with your approaching marriage. She saw and pitied the distress to which this cruel intelligence reduced me, administering all the consolation in her power, though it availed but little, as she could not banish the dreadful truth from my memory, that you were soon to be the wife of Sir Charles Melrofs. After some more painful conversation had passed, in which she often cut me to the soul without intending it, by saying, 'Ah, my lord! you should never have thought ill of my poor lady, and then this would not have happened.' I could not endure to remain any longer in a place where every object reminded me of lost happiness; and, hastily bidding adieu to Terefe, whom I valued more than ever for her unshaken fidelity to you, I mounted my horse, and, returning to my farm-house, gave immediate orders for a post-chaise to be procured from the neighbouring town, determined to set off the instant it arrived,

being

being unable to enjoy a moment's peace, till I had implored forgiveness of you, for having suspected your purity and truth. I have watched in different disguises several days about the neighbourhood, before I could gain this opportunity, and I hope you are now convinced how much we have both been injured. But I must not forget to mention that I staid some time in London purposely to obtain an interview with the Baron de Belmont, whom I brought to a confession that he had been instigated by Lord Darlington (whom de Valcour had treacherously informed of our attachment, and at the same time suppressed our letters) to invent those falsehoods of you, having himself never seen, or even heard of you and de Valcour, and would not for any consideration have aided such a scheme, if my father had not represented you as a girl of infamous character, who wished to seduce me to marry her."

Here

Here Lord Henry paused, and Ermina, who was now convinced how cruelly she had been deceived, and that this intelligence, pleasing as it would have been at an earlier period, served only at that moment to make her more unhappy, gave way to an agony of tears, which she found it impossible to suppress. Unable to restrain his feelings at witnessing her emotion, he threw himself at her feet ; and, grasping her hand, imprinted a thousand kisses on it ; while, lost to every recollection but of their unfortunate destiny, mutual sobs burst from their agitated bosoms. They could look forward to no consolatory hope ; for honour, Ermina faintly articulated, forbade that she should break her engagement with Sir Charles Melross. Overwhelmed with grief, they continued insensible to every thing around them, till Ermina recollecting her situation, said in a voice scarcely audible, they must separate.

Almost

Almost frantic at the idea of losing her, Lord Henry implored her compassion, intreating her not to sacrifice their happiness to a vain phantom of honour. This she steadily refused; and, irritated, abandoned to passion by the stings of disappointed affection, he exclaimed, "Then you never loved me, deceitful girl, if I am to be resigned for the empty opinion of the world! You must prefer Sir Charles; but I swear by God, that I will not live to see you his wife—either one or other of us must fall. I will hasten instantly to him, and demand satisfaction." He was haughtily hurrying away, when the trembling Ermina, gaining courage from her extreme terror, eagerly caught hold of his arm; and, while he gently struggled to disengage himself, thus addressed him, while the tears streamed from her eyes: "Is it possible, my lord, that you can doubt (though forced by a cruel and fatal necessity to give my hand to Sir Charles) that you are
in-

inexpressibly dear to me, and that your life is even more valuable to me than my own? sentiments, which, situated as I am, I ought not to avow; but that you oblige me to it. Alas! by risking your existence you will destroy mine; for I may yet survive being married to another, as honour demands the sacrifice; but never, oh never can I survive your death, or that of a worthy man's to whom no blame can be attached, and who has treated me with a generosity I am far from meriting. Cease then to wound a heart already sinking with affliction, but whose sorrows would be lessened were you more composed. Let me now bid you a last adieu, and, when you think of me, Lord Henry, be assured that had fortune been propitious, Ermina's first ideas of felicity would have been to have united her fate with yours." Incapable of resisting the tender alarm and soothing accents of the woman he loved, he became suddenly restored

stored to reason, and again implored her forgiveness. She easily pardoned him, as his conduct proceeded from the violence of his regard for her, and they walked together in a gloomy silence till they arrived within sight of the hall. Lord Henry then hastily snatched a kiss, and, with one violent effort, tore himself away, whilst the wretched Ermina could not resist looking with mournful tenderness after him, till he was no longer discernible.

They had separated but a few minutes, when, to her extreme terror, she was met by Sir Charles. "I have been searching for you these two hours," said he, "and cannot imagine where you have concealed yourself. But, my God!" observing the pallid hue of her countenance, "how ill you look! why are you so imprudent to fatigue yourself with such extensive walks? When I have a nearer claim to you, I shall

shall forbid these rambles." Ermina forced a faint smile, but her heart accorded not with it, and sickened at his last words. On their arrival at the hall, she pleaded excessive fatigue, that she might retire to her room to escape observation, and she no sooner entered it, than she shed a torrent of tears at the severity of her destiny. "Alas!" she mournfully exclaimed, "I shall see him no more, and it is myself that occasion it, by my rashness in entering so early into a new engagement. Ah, why does inexorable honour forbid me to marry the man, whom I so fatally and truly love!" Continuing agitated and unhappy, she confined herself to her apartment the remainder of the day; nor was it necessary for her to feign indisposition as an excuse for wishing to be alone, as she really felt ill from the affecting scene she had participated in. The images of Sir Charles and Lord Henry were constantly in her thoughts, as she knew the

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former, though possessed of an excellent heart, was of a violent, jealous temper, loving and hating in extremes; and this made her apprehensive, as the latter was likewise rather impetuous, that if at her wish the marriage should be delayed, and Sir Charles gain intelligence of what had passed, the most alarming consequences were to be expected from his jealous rage, and either Lord Henry or himself be the victim of it. She trembled lest any person by accident should have seen her in the wood, or that the gipsies, though bribed to fidelity, might, by inadvertently talking, undesignedly betray them. She therefore saw no alternative to prevent the apprehended mischief, but by bestowing her hand on Sir Charles; and it would likewise, she reflected, defend her from the importunities of Lord Henry, whilst a high and virtuous sense of the new duties she had entered into, must incline her more steadily
to

to endeavour at conquering a passion, which she had hitherto found a difficult task. Evening advanced, her spirits were in the same perturbed state, and, at the usual hour of her taking repose, she was incapable of tasting it; which induced her to arrange her melancholy ideas in the following song, to soothe her sorrows, always receiving great relief when unhappy, by expressing her thoughts in verse :—

Ah! why will mem'ry bring to view
That fatal, melancholy morn,
When Henry falter'd out " Adieu!"
And sighing from these arms was borne?

Deceit, to human peace dread foe,
Caus'd me my Henry's loss to weep,
Dissolv'd this mind in tender woe
By wily arts and falsehoods deep.

But, when that time the veil remov'd,
That secret bade our sorrows flow;
Two hearts, that fondly, truly lov'd
Enjoy'd the purest bliss below.

Tho' fleeting dreams of joy are past,
 And Fate forbids me to be thine,
 Thy image in this breast shall last,
 Till life, till anguish, I resign ;

When she had finished writing, it was past midnight, and her taper nearly extinguished. She therefore undressed herself; and, after imploring a blessing from the almighty Source of every good, her exhausted mind found relief in a gentle slumber into which she soon sunk, enjoying a temporary oblivion of her cares, and sufferings; for neither her goodness or innocence could shield her from calamity, and she little deserved the misfortunes she had encountered. But, it is the lot of virtue to become more resplendent from the trials it endures; and, like gold, it comes purified from the fire.

CHAPTER IV.

Where'er thou dwell'st, oh Peace! with azure eyes
 Serene; or in stately structur'd dome,
 Or thatch-roof'd cottage low; or in cool grot
 By fountain clear, thou sitt'st; or if, perchance,
 Along the silver brook's green-liveried verge
 Reclin'd; approach, thou rosy, dimpled fair.—
 Leave thy sweet haunts awhile, and with that balm
 Which soothes the woe-struck heart, await her slum-
 bers.

HALL HARTSON.

IT was a gloomy morning, when Ermina
 awoke, and seemed congenial with the
 melancholy tenor of her mind, though she
 felt her fortitude restored by the refresh-
 ing sleep, in which she had passed the
 night. Thick mists obscured the tops of
 the

the Devon hills, the rain beat in torrents against the windows, whilst the wind, howling round the house, bent with violence the branches of the trees. At intervals was heard the sorrowful warbling of the birds, whose pensive notes seemed to lament the decline of the year, as they sung among the variegated foliage, which had assumed the brown and yellow tints of autumn, intermixed with the dusky fir, excepting where an oak; a laurel, or lauristinus, displayed its greener shades. She was enveloped in sad reflections, which the dismal scene before her tended to increase, rather than diminish, when Lady Assop's maid entered with a message from her lady, to enquire how she had slept, and if she was well enough to breakfast with them. Ermina said she was much better, and immediately joined Lady Assop, who received her with the utmost kindness, saying Sir Charles had left them quite out of spirits at her indisposition,

position, as he was afraid it might retard their journey to London.

“ I think, however,” added her ladyship, “ that as you appear nearly recovered, we may still set off the day after to-morrow, if not disagreeable to you, as I hope by that time you will be quite well.” Ermina mildly acquiesced ; for, resigning herself to her fate, she considered that the sooner an indissoluble barrier was placed between her and Lord Henry, the more it would be for their mutual happiness. Sir Charles came to dinner, and was delighted to see her recovered and animated ; for, to conceal the uneasiness that preyed on her heart, she affected a gaiety foreign to her feelings, and calculated to deceive any one unacquainted with what passed in her mind. The following day Mrs. Helder-ton came to take her leave of the family, as she was to quit Devonshire two or

three days after them, which somewhat surprised Ermina, from her having said a little while back, that she should not leave the country till January; but her caprices were so numerous that it was impossible to account for the motives that actuated her. She overwhelmed our heroine with professions of friendship, which, from knowing her disposition, she estimated as they deserved; and the coldness of her manner evinced to the widow that she had not forgotten the cruelty and insolence she received from her, when depressed by misfortune. Mrs. Helderton affected not to perceive her marked indifference, and behaved as if she had always been her most affectionate and gentle friend.

Early on the morning of the appointed day, Sir John and Lady Assop, accompanied by Sir Charles and Ermina, drove off for town in a post-coach and four,
Miss

Miss Diana with the children following in another. The hurry of travelling, the diversity of objects on the road, united with the pleasing attentions of her friends and lover, diffused a gentle serenity into her wounded bosom; and being never left to herself, as Miss Dy was her companion at night, during the whole of the journey, she had no opportunity of indulging reflections prejudicial to her peace. She consequently arrived with recruited spirits at Sir John's house in Park-lane, and was delighted with the situation, from its commanding a view of Hyde Park, where she often intended to have the pleasure of walking, and so much charmed was she with this part of the town, that she was rejoiced to find Sir Charles Melross had taken a house in the lane, at a very short distance from her present residence.

Soon after their arrival, Ermina received a visit from Lady Julia, who after-

wards accompanied her several times when she went out to purchase different articles of bridal finery. One morning when they were stepping out of their carriage to enter a jeweller's shop, they were accosted by the Hon. Mr. Glencarnock and another gentleman, almost as ugly as himself, who walked into the shop, and remained chatting with them, whilst they made their purchases ; nor could they get rid of them till they drove home, though they received their attentions in as repulsive a manner as possible without being grossly rude. " Did you ever see two such disgusting creatures," asked Lady Julia, " as Glencarnock and his friend Sir Patrick O'Neil ?" " No, never," replied Ermina, " they are extremely well matched ; but now I recollect, do tell me if you have discovered the other gentleman who accompanied us with Mr. Spencer from the play ?" " Oh! exceedingly well thought of," said Lady Julia,

Julia, " I quite forgot to mention the circumstance. His name is Desmond, a relation of Lord Wentworth's. He called on me a few weeks since, and was astonished when I related the manner of Glencarnock's being introduced to me, and concluded it to be a trick of Spencer's, whose acquaintance he should henceforward renounce; informing me, that he had desired Spencer to call and make an apology to me for his not accompanying him, as he was obliged immediately to leave town from the dangerous illness of his brother, with whom he afterwards remained till he recovered, and then proceeded to Wales, where the invalid was ordered for the re-establishment of his health. All these circumstances, combined together, prevented his returning to London for some time; but since his arrival having heard a very indifferent account both of Spencer and Glencarnock, which, added to the insult offered

me, strongly tempted him to severely chastise them; but I persuaded him to think them below even contempt, and unworthy the resentment of a man of honour. This," continued Lady Julia, " Mr. Desmond certainly is; and I shall with pleasure introduce you to him, for he has made numberless enquiries after you, and is a most elegant accomplished man. Take care, therefore, to guard your heart." Ermina smiled, and said she should like to see him, and Lady Julia kept her promise: for, the next visit she made her, she was introduced to Mr. Desmond, whom she found exactly what her ladyship had described. Glencarnock frequently left his card at Sir John's, but Ermina being constantly denied, made him soon tired of knocking at the door, and he ceased calling; yet if he met her accidentally in the street, or at Mrs. Helderton's parties, where she was obliged sometimes to go
with

with Lady Assop (for with the widow he was intimately acquainted), he was troublesome in an extreme degree, though he saw how much she disliked his ridiculous attentions, prompted more by malice than any other motive to tease her, in revenge for the little estimation in which she held him ; for deformed people are generally malignant, their minds being as deficient in goodness, as their persons are in beauty.

Ermina had been in town nearly five weeks, and at the end of another, had consented to become the wife of Sir Charles ; an event to which she looked forward with less painful reluctance, than when she first quitted Devonshire, not having heard any more of Lord Henry, who, she hoped (whilst she sighed at the possibility of it) had reconciled himself to the certainty of losing her for ever. Immediately after the nuptials, the
new

new married pair were to set off for Sir Charles's country-seat in Dorsetshire, which was almost contiguous to the seaside.

Five days previous to the marriage, as Ermina was seated alone in the drawing-room, embroidering a court-dress intended as a present for Lady Allop, Sir Charles, who had been out, returned and entered the room with an unusual gloom over his countenance, and with an air so perturbed and agitated, that Ermina viewed him with surprise, and with her accustomed sweetness enquired if he was indisposed. Coldly returning an indifferent answer to the obliging concern she evinced, he threw himself on the sofa, and leant back with his hand pressed to his forehead, apparently absorbed in no very agreeable reverie. This neglectful behaviour hurt her more from being unaccustomed to it, and she arose to quit the

the room without his making any effort to detain her. To Ermina this conduct appeared unaccountable ; but reflecting that he might probably have met with some disagreeable occurrence he was averse to mention, she resolved to make it of no moment, though on such occasions she had seen him behave very differently, but she hoped notwithstanding, that his natural good humour would soon be restored. After she had dressed for dinner, she descended to the drawing-room, where, in addition to the family party, were several ladies and gentlemen, amongst whom she saw Lady Julia and Mrs. Helderton. Sir Charles did not notice Ermina's entrance, but continued in earnest conversation with Mrs. Helderton, over whose chair he was leaning, which rather astonished our heroine, as he always expressed the utmost aversion to her manners and principles.

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He persevered in the same inattention to Ermina the remainder of the evening, but, ever ready to make excuses for others, she attributed his reserve to delicacy, imagining that he thought, as their union was so soon to take place, an open display of tenderness would draw upon her the general observation of the company, and admired him for consulting her timidity in opposition to his own feelings, which would have prompted him, she concluded, to shew her more affection. For the following night a party was formed to the theatre, and, except at breakfast the next morning, when he seemed to avoid her looks, she saw no more of him till evening. The play was *Venice Preserved*, and she entered so feelingly into the distresses of the amiable *Belvidera*, that she was near fainting, which was observed by Lady Assop, who desired Sir Charles to support her to the lobby, whither she accompanied him, and
sent

sent another gentleman of the party for a glass of water. When she had drunk some of it she began to revive ; and, raising her beautiful eyes that were closed, whilst she leant on the shoulder of Sir Charles, though she did not quite faint away, the first object she saw was Lord Henry Beauchamp contemplating her with an air of the deepest dejection, apparently regardless of every one but herself, whilst Sir Charles surveyed him with a fierce and sullen countenance. At the sight of him, so long, so well, beloved, so irrecoverable lost, and unwished for at that moment, in the presence of his rival, a thousand horrid fears assailed her imagination ; and, uttering an agonizing shriek, she sunk senseless into the arms of Sir Charles. What afterwards occurred, she was a stranger to, as she found herself when she recovered in her own bed, and Lady Assop seated by the side of it, who

kindly

kindly enquired how she did. She replied that she found herself better, and after wishing her a good night's repose, and asking if she would have any one to sit up with her, which she refused, Lady Affop left her. Bitter indeed were poor Ermina's reflections, now she could indulge them unobserved, for the cause of the alteration in Sir Charles's manner towards her now forcibly obtruded itself on her mind. She conjectured he had, by what chance she could not divine, heard of the attachment subsisting between Lord Henry and herself, which had rendered him jealous and morose, and their meeting at the playhouse, though she had not seen him till he was in the lobby, she dreaded might render him suspicious of her fidelity. Restless and uneasy, she passed a wretched night, as if she dozed but for a few moments, she awoke in terror, as the most fright-
ful

ful images appeared in her dreams, and prevented her enjoying any benefit from repose.

She arose in the morning, languid and ill, and at breakfast was surprised, yet relieved, to find Sir Charles absent. Lady Assop seized the first opportunity of their being alone to tell Ermina, that she thought the conduct of Sir Charles Melrofs singular in the extreme, by thus evincing such pointed neglect of his future bride on the eve of their nuptials. "This behaviour would not be so extraordinary," continued her ladyship, "was he going to marry for interested motives, but when, on the contrary, it is publicly known, how violently he is in love, and that you have no fortune, it is really quite inexplicable." Ermina endeavoured, though awkwardly, to excuse him; but plainly perceived it was not possible to remove the ill impression from Lady Assop's

Allop's mind, which his capricious conduct had made there. He returned to dinner with the same gloomy countenance, he had worn for some days past, which he now, however, strove to disguise, by attempting at a vivacity evidently foreign to his heart. Though he seldom addressed Ermina, yet, when he did, it was with more tender interest than on the preceding day. He enquired if she was recovered from her indisposition, and observed how pale she looked; yet he avoided mentioning a word of their approaching marriage, which appeared very remarkable, as the day after the morrow was appointed for its celebration. The altered manners of Sir Charles quite depressed her spirits, and she was rejoiced when, at night, the usual hour of retiring to rest arrived, that she might escape to her chamber from his society, which was now as disagreeable to her as formerly it had been pleasing. But when she

she arose to quit the room, figure to yourself her astonishment, at seeing him with visible emotion advance towards her, seize her hand ; and, suddenly kissing it, rush out of the apartment with his handkerchief to his eyes, regardless of any one being present. Nobody spoke, though all formed different conjectures, while Ermina covered with blushes gladly retired, pleased though confused at his behaviour, which she concluded, was meant as an atonement for his late unkindness. The consolatory reflection, that he was sensible of having treated her in a manner she did not deserve, and was sorry for it, renovated her exhausted spirits, and she looked forward to the future with more pleasure than she had for a long time experienced.

The next morning she expected Sir Charles at the breakfast table, but was disappointed ; and, when Sir John sent to
his

his servant to know if his master was up, intelligence was brought that he had been out ever since seven o'clock. At this information they all looked at one another with astonishment, till Lady Assop observed they should most probably see him in the course of the morning, though she was rather surprised that he had not mentioned going out so early. Ermina blushed deeply at perceiving that both Sir John and Lady Assop seemed to view her with an eye of pity, and Miss Dy with an ill-natured scrutiny, that made her glad to retreat from their observation to her own apartment, where she indulged a train of ideas that agitated her mind, as the mysterious conduct of Sir Charles involved her in a labyrinth of doubt, and her heart sunk with the apprehension of troubles that apparently had no foundation. Every knock at the door made her look over the staircase, with the hope that it was he, as she felt an anxiety for his return,

return, that she could not account for ; but her wishes were continually frustrated.

The hours rolled heavily on till two o'clock, when a thundering rap at the door announced some visitor of importance. Ermina flew to her new post, and beheld Mrs. Helderton with another lady coming up stairs, talking very earnestly together, but in such a low tone, that the name of Sir Charles was the only sound she could distinguish, and she perceived her apply an handkerchief to her eyes very frequently, as if weeping. Surprised at what she witnessed, an unaccountable and universal tremor pervaded her whole frame, and she was almost gasping for breath, when another thundering rap at the door made her hope she should not again be disappointed. She heard a great bustle on opening the door, and, soon after a loud shriek, whilst the

servants

servants seemed to be flying about in uncommon confusion, which tempted her to descend and enquire what had happened, but she altered her intention as she saw one of the maid servants coming up stairs, and beckoning to her, asked what had occurred, and who it was that shrieked so violently. The person of whom Ermina made this enquiry was a simple west-country girl, and answered that it was Betty the housemaid, who had gone into hysterics at seeing the poor gentleman covered with blood. "What gentleman do you mean?" demanded Miss Montrose, struck with a dreadful foreboding of some fatal event. "Why Lord love ye, mem, if ye da'nt know it, I be sorry to be the vurst to tell ye, but 'tis poor Sir Charles that has bin murdered."

No farther sound reached the wretched Ermina's ear, but with a deep groan she
instantly

instantly fainted away, and would have fallen to the ground, had not the girl caught hold of her, and, having placed her gently on the floor, ran for more assistance. Fanny was the first person she met, whom she informed of what had passed ; and, returning with her, they both supported Ermina to her chamber, and laying her on the bed, exerted their utmost efforts to restore her to animation. Some time elapsed before they succeeded, and when, after a long interval, she opened her eyes and recovered her recollection, a flood of tears very beneficial to her bedewed her cheeks. Finding her so much better, the country servant left her to the care of Fanny, to whom Ermina expressed surprise, that neither Lady Aslop or Miss Diana had taken the precaution of preventing her hearing the dreadful intelligence relative to Sir Charles in so abrupt a manner.

“ You pretend to be very innocent, miss,” said Fanny, looking at her with an insolence she had never observed before, “ for if you think at all you can’t wonder that my mistress and Miss Diana should hate to see you, after all the mischief you have occasioned by your naughty behaviour, to call it no worse; as to be sure what can be more wicked than going to be married to one gentleman, and at the same time courting of another? Oh! fye upon you, to make them fight for you, so that they be almost killed, for they be both wounded, and if Sir Charles dies, as the surgeon says he will, there being very little hopes of his life, Lord Beauchamp will be hung, or must fly the country.” These last words, which confirmed all that Ermina’s imagination had represented as most horrible, rent her heart with an agony that beggared description, and she wrung her hands in anguish whilst the tears no longer streamed from her eyes,

eyes, the greatness of her misfortunes having dried up that source of relief to a mind oppressed with sorrow. Almost frantic, she insisted upon going to Sir Charles to assert her innocence, and take a last farewell of him; but she was prevented by Fanny, who said Lady Assop had given orders that she should not be suffered to see him:—"Therefore, miss," continued the maid, "it will be useless to attempt it, and only expose you to insult and disgrace before the servants."

Ermina's bosom was now torn with the most bitter grief, for she found, that, guiltless as she was, she was made to appear criminal in the eyes of the world. She would have forced herself into the presence of Lady Assop notwithstanding Fanny's assertions, thinking she would believe her solemn asseverations of innocence, had not Mrs. Helderton been with her, who, she knew, secretly disliked her,

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and

and would prevent any credit being given to her protestations. She could not imagine who it was that had traduced her character, and her thoughts wandered over all her acquaintance, endeavouring to discover the secret enemy that had tarnished her reputation. But in vain, for on no one could her suspicions rest. Tears, sighs, and mournful exclamations, relieved the anguish of her soul ; and, falling on her knees, she implored God to direct her in what manner best to act. “ Alas !” she exclaimed, “ I have acted wrong in suffering my imagination to dwell on the remembrance of Lord Henry, when going to be united to another. This has been all my guilt, all my infidelity. I have felt too much pleasure in the indulgence of thinking of him.”

Prejudiced as she was against Miss Montrose, Fanny could not forbear weeping at beholding the agony of her mind,
and

and was almost inclined to believe her innocent; but so skilfully had the plot been laid to effect her ruin, that it must have been a stronger mind, and one better informed than this young woman's, that could have penetrated through the dark mysterious cloud, that malice and jealousy had thrown over Ermina's fate. More influenced, therefore, by sparks of pity (which the sight of her affliction must have raised even in the most obdurate breast) rather than any other consideration, Fanny said in a voice of compassion, " I'm sure, miss, I be very sorry for you, and beg your pardon for what I said to offend you at first; but, you know, when a body hears things told of another person, they can't tell what to think. Howsomever, if there be's any thing in my power by which I can sarve you, you've only to speak, and I'll be ready to do it."

At these words Ermina sighed, and endeavoured to recal her scattered thoughts, which grief had rendered wild and confused, and her first idea was to escape from a house, where misery and shame awaited her. She trembled with the apprehension, that, if she remained much longer an inmate of it, she might perhaps be forcibly detained to witness a scene of death, she would be accused of having occasioned, yet whither to go she knew not; and terror made her dread to a certainty that the tale of her infamy would reach the few friends she had in London, and she would not, she resolved, risque the being contemptuously repulsed from their doors.

In despair, she desired Fanny to call her a hackney-coach, and assist her in packing up her clothes, which was soon effected, and she left behind her every article of bridal dress, and the different presents

sents of money, jewels, &c. which she had received from Sir Charles, leaving herself mistress but of ten guineas, with a watch that had been her father's, and a few trinkets, that had belonged to her mother.

When the hackney-coach was at the door, she desired Fanny to carry her boxes down, and let her know if all the servants were out of the way; and, on her bringing word that there was no one in the hall but the porter, Ermina crept softly down stairs, supported by her arm, and reached the coach unobserved. She had slipped half a guinea into Fanny's hand; and, telling her to order the coachman to drive to Oxford-street, she drew up both the windows, and in a moment lost sight of the house. In desiring to be driven to Oxford-street, she had no meaning except to mislead Fanny, in making her suppose that she was going to some

F 4

house

house there, as she wished to be quite concealed. When she was in Oxford-street, the coachman stopped, and she desired him to drive up the small streets leading from it, and stop at some of the houses where there were bills in the windows for lodgings to be let. After examining several, and meeting with none to suit her, she proceeded farther on, and got out at a small haberdasher's shop in Duke-street, Portland-place, where she hired a second floor which was extremely neat and cheap, and the woman who kept the shop, who was her landlady, seemed a civil obliging person. She was to pay fifteen shillings a week for her lodging, and the servant of the house was to attend her without any additional expence. A gentleman and lady she was informed lodged on the first floor, who were very gay people, which she was sorry to hear, fearful that it would make her situation not so retired as she could have wished :

wished : but had a thousand other inconveniences been attached to the lodging, she would have put up with them, so fatigued and ill was she with grief and driving about through so many streets. She took the lodging under the name of Miss Smith, and, though she felt a repugnance at doing it, yet, circumstanced as she was, she felt it absolutely necessary.

CHAPTER V

Thy crooked mind within hunch'd out thy back,
 And wander'd in thy limbs; to thy own kind
 Make love, if thou canst find it in the world,
 And seek not from our sex to raise an offspring,
 Which, mingled with the rest, would tempt the
 gods
 To cut off human kind.—

DRYDEN and LEE.

SEVERELY as Ermina had been tried in the school of adversity, yet all her past sufferings appeared trifling to what she now endured. The remainder of the day passed in weeping, till her eyes were almost swoln out of her head, though she struggled to recover composure, and divert her miserable thoughts by arranging her clothes, drawings, &c. in her little apartment.

apartment. She regretted, that, in the agitation of her mind, she had forgotten her harp, as she used frequently to beguile her sorrows by playing airs congenial to her feelings. The night brought no relief to her afflicted mind, as the cruel thoughts which haunted her forbade repose; and, in the morning she found herself so ill, that she had scarce strength to dress herself. The servant, when she attended at breakfast, was struck with the alteration in her appearance, which a few hours had produced. Her eyes had lost their animation, her cheeks were pale and hollow, her lips parched, and her hands burnt like fire. She grew worse as the day advanced, and in the evening her fever was so high that she was quite delirious. Mrs. Brown, her landlady, learning from the servant the dangerous condition of her new lodger, sent immediately for an apothecary, who, fortunately for Ermina, was one of the

most skilful and feeling men of his profession. He felt interested for his lovely patient, whose disorder he soon discovered to have originated from mental agitation, and his medicines were so efficacious that in a few days the violence of her fever abated, though she continued nearly a fortnight very low and weak.

After this period she recovered, but by slow degrees, as the establishment of her health was greatly retarded by anxiety of mind, and the impoverished state of her finances, which were reduced to a very few guineas, after paying the nurse, Mr. Goodman the apothecary, and her landlady. She found it, therefore, absolutely expedient to seek out some method of supporting herself, and wished for a situation as governess, or companion to a lady; but it was unattainable, as she had no one to recommend or vouch for her character; neither had she an opportunity

nity of hearing of such situations, as she never saw even a newspaper, where those places are often advertised. The mistress of the house appeared indeed to be a friendly good woman, but she dared not confide in her till they were longer acquainted; and, after revolving numberless plans in her mind, she at length formed the resolution of applying to different shops to be employed in embroidering, and making artificial flowers, which she executed with great taste, having been instructed by the nuns, who had arrived at great perfection in both these arts.

In consequence of this arrangement, Ermina dressed herself in the plainest style, put on a large bonnet, and as she was much altered by illness, had lost all her colour, and grown exceedingly thin, she hoped, should she be met by any of her acquaintance, not to be recognised by them. Unaccustomed to walk alone
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in the streets, she felt timid and confused, and so uncomfortable that she was glad to take refuge in the first fancy-shop she saw. Here she exhibited specimens of her work, and very luckily (as it prevented her the trouble of seeking anywhere else employment) Madame Daufeuille, the mistress of the shop, was so much pleased with them, that she told her to call the next morning; and that, if she found on enquiry in the course of the day that she was a person proper to be intrusted with work, she would give her some employment immediately. Ermina referred her to Mrs. Brown where she lodged, whom she desired, when she returned home, to speak favourably of her if any person called to enquire her character, and was assured by her that she would do so with pleasure. The next morning she went as requested to Madame Daufeuille's, who gave orders for her to make a trimming of artificial flowers for

for the train and petticoat of a court-dress. Delighted with her success, Ermina began this employment with alacrity, and executed it so much to the satisfaction of her employer that she constantly engaged her, sometimes with embroidery, and sometimes in making artificial flowers. This she found very lucrative, and gained sufficient to pay her expences ; but her excessive attention to business weakened her health, and Mrs. Brown frequently remonstrated with her, saying if she continued such constant application, she must inevitably make herself ill. Ermina admitted the justness of her observations, but was afraid by relaxing in her industry to displease Madame Daufeuille, who would withdraw her work if her orders were not quickly executed, some of the journeywomen having told her that she frequently discharged the persons whom she employed on the slightest pretext. And she was apprehensive

hensive that she might not again meet with an employer, that would so liberally supply her with work, and pay her so well ; besides, the distance was so trifling from where she lived, that it was extremely desirable, as she had not far to walk, though she had got the better of her fears of walking alone, being accustomed to go generally every other day to Madame Daufeuille's ; but she contrived to set out very early in the morning, except ordered to come at any particular hour.

The constant employment in which Ermina was engaged, prevented her mind from dwelling so much as it would otherwise have done, on her past and present misfortunes, which were heightened and aggravated by the state of uncertainty into which she was plunged, and from which she knew not how to extricate herself, as, without hazarding the exposure

fure of her mortifying situation, she could not employ any person to enquire if Sir Charles was dead, if her friends considered her in a favourable light, and felt anxiety for her fate, and what was become of Lord Henry. She dared not indulge the hope that Sir Charles was alive; but she feared, even if his life was spared, that the secret and mysterious enemy of her peace would prevent his ever thinking of her again with esteem; and, when fancy pictured to her the contempt and detestation in which her memory must be held, from the calumny raised against her, the too faithful representation subdued her feelings, and, throwing down her work, she would burst into tears, and remain for some moments overcome with grief. Had she been released from her engagements with Sir Charles, in a manner that would have reflected no dishonour on her reputation, she would have felt delighted at her eman-

emancipation, and gladly resigned all claim to him, conscious that her bosom nourished a passion incompatible with the affection she ought to have felt for her destined husband, on whom friendship and esteem was all she had to bestow. But, alas ! so cruel was her fortune, that though Lord Henry was now free to offer her his hand, she must resign the valued gift, as she could not with propriety (harshly as the world already viewed her) unite herself to him, who had been the murderer of her affianced husband, to whom she owed the warmest gratitude, for his generous intention of raising her, poor and portionless as she was, to his rank and fortune : but, though she strove to conceal it, the idea that was most painful to her, was, that she should see Lord Henry no more, as he would most probably be an exile from his country, and be ignorant of the wretched destiny of her he so much loved.

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She was later than usual one morning in carrying home her work, which made her walk very fast, from the apprehension of being beyond the hour Madame Daufeille had appointed for her coming, and the exercise of walking quick raised so beautiful a bloom in her cheeks, that she looked almost as lovely as before her illness, and attracted the admiration of a gentleman she met in the street; for, going out in a hurry, and feeling secure from not having yet been discovered, she had placed her large bonnet less over her face. The gentleman (though from being an ugly, mean, little, figure, and dressed in the jockey style, he did not appear like one) immediately turned back to follow her, and was very annoying, as he was continually stopping before her, and staring in her face; but, appearing not to observe it, just as she reached Madame Daufeille's she lost sight of him. When she had finished her business there,

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and was going away, she perceived her tormentor watching her from an opposite shop; but she hoped she had quite got rid of him, as he did not offer to follow her again.

A day or two after this, as she was seated working a piece of embroidery, some one knocked at the door of her apartment, and, upon her saying, "Walk in," the door opened, when, to her great astonishment, entered the gentleman who had followed her in the street. He bowed very respectfully, and said he had been recommended to her by Madame Daufeuille, as he wished to purchase some of her embroidery, to make a present to his sister who was going to be married, and gave orders for a pair of screens, and an elegant work bag. Ermina was quite chagrined at having her place of residence discovered to a stranger, and regretted that she had not taken the precaution

caution of desiring Madame Daufeuille not to disclose it to any person. She had in fact once thought of doing so, but was checked by the fear of infusing suspicions into her mind, as she knew her to be a very inquisitive woman, and fond of prying into other people's affairs. Sir Patrick O'Neil, for so this gentleman announced himself, was of a diminutive stature, his face plain, his voice rough, his manners were coarse and simple, and he stuttered so violently that it was painful to hear him. This, added to the idiot-like style of his behaviour, made him appear quite like a fool, though he was in reality a man of sound understanding, and great depth of art. By affecting to be deficient in sense, he frequently made dupes of others, and the ladies often suffered liberties and impertinence from him, which they would have resented from any other man, but excused it in him, supposing he did not mean to offend,

and

and that his conduct proceeded from ignorance and folly, as he was apparently quite a child of nature. To Ermina he, however, behaved with great respect, and she concluded from his conducting himself so well, that he had forgotten she was the same person he had followed in the street, and had actually without any sinister design called on her about the embroidery.

As Ermina was engaged some days afterwards with her usual occupations, Sir Patrick came into her apartment, accompanied by the Hon. Mr. Glencarnock. Motionless with vexation and surprise, she for the time recollected having once seen Sir Patrick before with him, and, having scarcely noticed him at the time, had quite forgotten his person; but, seeing them together, she now remembered that Lady Julia had told her that they were great friends. With difficulty she
returned

returned their compliments, overwhelmed with confusion at what she most dreaded, the being discovered by any of her acquaintance in such a mysterious, humiliating, and doubtful mode of life, and which, she evidently perceived, seemed to authorise Glencarnock to display that impudence and insolence of manners, with which he always insulted unprotected women. He leered at her from the corners of his dull grey eyes, expressive of nothing but impurity, and Sir Patrick, encouraged by his assurance, began to take very reprehensible freedoms, and was troublesome in the extreme. “Aw, aw, aw, Miss Montrose” (for he had dropped the appellation of Smith, following the example of Glencarnock, who called her Montrose), “I never saw a woman I, I, liked better in my life; I’ll marry you ’pon my honour; cou’d, cou’d, cou’d’nt, sleep last night, for thinking of you, charming creature! Don’t look upon

on me with that hawk's eye, it pierces my heart. If you, you'll marry me, I, I'll keep you a phaeton, do every thing in my power to make you happy, strain every nerve in my body to please you; I, I'd never marry for fortune. I, I'd marry for love." "Your language," replied Ermina, "is very eloquent, nervous, and energetic, and pity it is, that one who speaks so well should speak in vain; but, obliging as you are, Sir Patrick, and generously inclined towards me, I do not feel in the least disposed to take advantage of your liberal offers." "Aw, aw, aw, but by God I love you," rejoined Sir Patrick. "What shall I do to convince you of it? Let me write you a letter, and promise to read it. Aw, aw, aw, if I, I, was married to you, I, I'd kiss you all day. Why don't you know that you, you'd be a lady? I, I've got a house at Tunbridge; shou'd you like to live there? or at Richmond, where I've another?"

"The

“ The greatest favour you could do me, Sir Patrick, is to take your leave, as I am contented,” continued Ermina, “ with being the daughter of a gentleman ; and, though obliged by misfortune to earn my subsistence in this humble manner, I am not ambitious to resign it for any proffered grandeur with which you endeavour to dazzle me, as I am unfortunate. Besides, I am convinced, though you have the insolence to offer in this jesting style to make me your wife, it is the last thing you would really do ; for, from what I now recollect to have heard of your character and fortune, you are too parsimonious, even if you were rich (which you are not), to marry any female from disinterested motives.” “ No, no, but d—— me if I, I, am not serious,” said he, not at all rebuffed by her severe observations. “ Do, do, let me attend you to the play or opera, and give me a lock of your hair.” “ I thank you, Sir Patrick ; but

I have no inclination to have it shewn all over the town, and treated as you did poor Miss Bloomfield's, whose letters and a lock of whose hair, it is publickly known, you shewed and boasted of to all your libertine companions."

"By God, you are right, my fair Montrose," said Glencarnock, strutting up to her—"Do not attend to him, he is an Irishman, but take a Scotchman, for I am one." Angry as she was, Ermina could not avoid laughing at his absurd vanity, and thought within herself, that he was more like a monster than a man. Such excessive conceit and impudence as she met with in these two friends almost struck her dumb, as she had never witnessed any thing like it before, and she dared not resent their conduct as she would have done in any other situation, being apprehensive of provoking them to revenge themselves on her. Of Glencarnock

carnock she was more afraid than Sir Patrick, having heard that he was the most malicious wretch in the world if offended, his mind being as deformed as his person was hideous. Had she not been fearful of irritating them, she would have ordered herself to be denied to them; but the fear of having her abode discovered, which she requested them to conceal, made her submit to the occasional society of two of the most disgusting beings that ever were created, as calling to enquire the progress of the embroidery they had ordered (for Glencarnock had likewise ordered a piece of work) formed a pretext for their frequent visits. Their behaviour became however at last so intolerable, that Ermina found it no longer possible to keep any terms with them, and insisted that they should see her no more. The spiritedness of her conduct had a proper effect on Sir Patrick, who had (strange to relate from the amazing stock he possessed)

feſſed) leſs impudence than his friend, and fortunately ſhe got quite rid of him.

Glencarnock was, however, incorrigible : for, though ſhe had ordered the ſervants always to deny her to him, he generally contrived, by ſtratagem or bribes, to gain admittance; and, as ſhe was often obliged to be alone with him, he would talk to her in a ſtrain of insolent vanity, that from ſuch a reptile rather excited contempt and laughter, than any ſenſation of anger. He was glad at her having effectually diſmiſſed Sir Patrick, as it left him maſter of the field; and he made love to her in a ſtyle ſtill more diſgultiſting and ridiculous than the other. Ermina had, indeed, conceived the idea that the freedom of Sir Patrick's manners originated in ſome falſehoods Glencarnock had invented of her, as he had conducted himſelf ſo differently when he firſt viſited her lodgings.

One

One morning he told her that he was seriously in love, and should expect her to give a positive answer in the course of a fortnight whether she would have him or not. Ermina replied that there was no necessity for deliberating so long about it, as she was already determined, and would never have him. "I will keep you a carriage then," said he; "and as I cannot marry you publicly, on account of my father Lord Dunbarton, I'll marry you privately, and we'll go abroad and travel for two or three years; but perhaps you had rather prefer another plan, that we should live together as Abelard and Eloisa. You look contemptuously at me for what I have proposed; but be assured, that you will most probably repent having refused me; and I'll tell you a story to strengthen my assertions, which is publicly known to be a fact.

"Lord R—— was very much in love

with Lady Arabella S——. He paid his addresses to her, and was several times refused. This sensibly wounded his pride, and after her last refusal of him, he turned on his heel, and left her, resolved to think no more of her, and in consequence of this resolution he dashed away, kept different mistresses, and lived in the highest and gayest style. About ten years after, he happened to be dining with a party, where, amongst a number of ladies, by chance was Lady Arabella S——, still unmarried; and, of course, not feeling very pleased with her, from her former conduct to him, he took no notice of her. After dinner the conversation turned on the different circumstances which each individual of the company had repented of most in their lives. When several of them had related the particular circumstance, Lady Arabella said, ‘ There is but one circumstance in my life of which I ever repented.’ ‘ Pray what

what one is that, Lady Arabella?" demanded Lord R——, ' who could not help being still interested in whatever concerned her.' ' The having refused you, my lord.' ' Do not let that afflict you, Lady Arabella,' he rejoined, ' for I am now ready to marry you to-morrow morning ; and, by God," said Glencarnock, " they were married within a few days after this. Now, my sweet Montrose, learn wisdom from this story ; for, if some ten years hence you should be single, or perhaps unhappily married, you may say with a sigh (as most likely it will not then be in your power to have me), I wish I had taken that little Glencarnock." With a smile Ermina replied, " I am not apprehensive of the fate you describe, nor capricious enough to be ignorant of my own mind ; for in refusing you I am decisive, and neither intend, or am anxious, to have the honour of being your bride."

“ Look favourably on me,” continued Glencarnock, “ and I’ll make you a present of my picture. Come, come, I cannot bear to see you fade on the virgin thorn.” Impertinent as he was, and insulting as the proposals were which he had made her, yet, from the gravity with which they were delivered, and coming from such a lump of deformity, she could not help bursting out into a fit of laughter at his extreme conceit in imagining that she would sacrifice her reputation for his sake ; and the idea of his having his portrait drawn was so truly ludicrous, that it must have moved the least risible muscles, and, although deformed people have in general no small share of vanity, yet he must have been blind indeed not to perceive how frightful he was ; for nose he had none, and only a piece of flat skin, where that feature should have been.

When

When Ermina had composed her countenance, she assured him, that it was far better for her “ to fade on the virgin thorn,” than wither by the side of such a weed as himself; but, more enraged at being turned into ridicule than at the keenest satire, a diabolical grin overspread his fallow countenance, and his voice, which always resembled the tones of a bagpipe, growled more hoarsely than ever, whilst he exclaimed—“ I’d advise you, Miss Montrose, to conduct yourself more properly, for you may laugh away every offer that is made you. You are not to imagine when a man talks love, that he is in jest;” and, snatching up his hat, he went out in a fury, giving her the most malignant glances. She had been at first rather frightened at the rage he evinced, as he looked more like an inhabitant of the infernal regions than a human being; but she consoled herself

with the idea that she had got rid of him for ever, though he was mean enough to go off in debt for some embroidery he had purchased. But she was happy at any expence to be rid of such a contemptible character, and had determined to have immediately quitted her lodgings if she could not have sufficiently offended him to make him discontinue his visits; for no consideration on earth could have any longer induced her to suffer them, as, when conversing with her, he always approached so near that she could not help viewing his loathed countenance, and he was continually taking hold of her hand, or touching her with his long skinny fingers (for his hand resembled a claw); and when he talked of love, she was frequently tempted to say with Dryden's Eurydice—

Love from thee !

Why Love renounc'd thee, ere thou saw'st the light :

Nature

Nature herself started back when thou wert born ;
 And cry'd the work's not mine—

————— and when she saw
 Thy mountain back, and thy distorted legs,
 Thy face itself,
 Half minted with the royal stamp of man,
 And half o'ercome with beast, stood doubting long
 Whose fight in thee were more ;
 And knew not, if to burn thee in the flames
 Were not the holier work.——

Ermina, on reflection, considered, that although she had got rid of Glencarnock, as it was probable, from the contempt she had shewn him, that his love would be converted to hatred, she must inevitably soon leave her present lodgings. This measure she felt averse to take, from the civility shewn her by Mrs. Brown ; but she was convinced that he would take the first opportunity of communicating to Lady Assop in what situation he had discovered her, with the addition of as many

falsehoods respecting her as his fertile imagination could invent. She knew, that, previous to the offence she had given him, it was his interest to keep her concealed, as he had it more in his power to prosecute his infamous schemes; but, now that he found she was averse to every thing he offered, she feared he would dream of nothing but revenge. She did not however make herself very uneasy respecting the scandal he might propagate to her disadvantage, his character being too generally known for its infamy for any thing he said to be relied on, or believed, except by his own libertine companions; for no one associated with him, but those as worthless as himself, though their persons were more prepossessing, and consequently more dangerous. Glencarnock was certainly a disgrace to the Scotch nobility; and it was fortunate for society that he was extremely

tremely poor, and, in order to dress well, obliged to live in a back room up two pair of stairs; for, had it been in his power to do as much mischief as his inclinations prompted, he would have been a still more disgraceful member of society than he already was. Though a miser in every other respect, he would spare no pains or expence to debauch the minds of innocent young women: nor could he bear to hear the praises of another; for, whenever he heard a person spoke well of, he always related something to their discredit; and Ermina, who despised this vice in him, took pleasure in praising many people quite indifferent to her, on purpose to torment him.

When our heroine had formed the resolution of quitting Duke-street, and was looking out for a new residence, she received unexpectedly the following letter:

“ Madam,

“ Madam,
“ Having been told by Madame Dau-
“ feuille, that you embroider exceedingly
“ well, and with superior taste, I have
“ recommended you to a lady who wishes
“ to have a set of chair-covers embroi-
“ dered under her own inspection. The
“ lady lives in the country near Windsor.
“ You will be so good as to let me know
“ if you have no objection to go to her,
“ as well as what you will charge for the
“ embroidery.

“ I have the honour to be,

“ Madam,

“ Your most obedient

“ Humble servant,

“ Edward Rivers.”

“ Colonel Rivers,

“ St. James’s-square.”

This letter quite delighted Ermina,
and made her hesitate about quitting the
lodging,

lodging, till she found whether she was to go to the lady or not; as, in the former case, there would be no necessity for incurring the expence of keeping her apartments. She imagined Colonel Rivers was some good old gentleman, and, feeling herself obliged to him, and hoping she should be employed at Windsor, she made it a point to reply immediately to his letter, and in the course of the day, she received another in answer to her's, which was as follows :

“ Madam,

“ I have just received the honour of
 “ yours, which informs me of your readiness to comply with the lady's desire.
 “ I shall certainly see her ladyship to-morrow morning, and will inform her
 “ of all you have said, and let you know
 “ her determination instantly. I feel myself happy in having an opportunity
 “ of

“ of serving, and shewing you the great
“ esteem and respect with which I am,

“ Madam,

“ Your most obedient

“ Humble servant,

“ Edward Rivers.”

Ermina's hopes were now raised higher than before, by the extreme politeness of this gentleman, which she concluded to be occasioned by the favourable manner Madame Daufeuille had mentioned her to him. She therefore hastened to thank her for her kindness, and was received by her with more attention than she had ever yet experienced. She learnt that the employment in which she was to be engaged would be very lucrative, and returned home, elated with the prospect of a change in her situation both profitable and agreeable.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VI.

Doth he assume the specious name of love ?
 Love is a bright, a generous quality,
 Heaven gave to nobler minds pure and unmix'd
 With every grosser stuff ; a goodly flower
 Shoots up and blossoms in great souls alone.

HALL HARTSON.

CHEERED by the expectation of soon quitting London, where she had experienced little else but misery (and from whose gaieties being now quite banished, it afforded her less amusement than the country), Ermina passed two days in very good spirits, endeavouring to forget her sorrows, as adversity had taught her lessons of fortitude, and to accommodate herself,

herself, without repining, to whatever might befall her. On the third day she received a letter from Colonel Rivers, desiring her to prepare for the following morning, when the lady's carriage would be at her door to convey her to Windsor, and he likewise mentioned that she was to stay there at least two months. In consequence of this information she packed up a large portmanteau full of clothes, drawings, and materials for work; and, leaving her books, and the remainder of her baggage, to the care of Mrs. Brown till her return, she took an affectionate farewell of the good woman, who shed tears at her departure, so much was she always beloved by every heart in which vice had not fixed its abode.

The morning was uncommonly fine when Ermina left London, and after the carriage had driven her some miles from town, she began to enjoy the view of the country,

country, which appeared more beautiful than ever, from her having been confined so long to no other prospect, but that of smoky houses and dusty streets. As the day advanced, she enquired of the postilion if they were not near Windsor, imagining from the rapid manner in which he drove that she must arrive there very shortly, and received for answer that they had not much farther to go, though his lady's house was a few miles distant from the town of Windsor. Notwithstanding these assertions, it was night before she arrived at her destined habitation; and, as there was no moon, it was so dark that she could not distinguish whither she was going, and her heart sunk within her. The carriage drove up to the house, and on the footman's ringing at the bell, an old woman made her appearance with a light, who thus accosted her: "My lady desired me to inform you, Miss Smith, that she was unexpectedly sent for to-day

day to meet her brother, who is just arrived from the East-Indies, but requests you to consider yourself at home, and that I am to provide you with every thing you require." At this intelligence Ermina felt disappointed, and shuddered as she viewed the old woman, whose person was the most unprepossessing she had ever beheld. She was a very diminutive figure, her skin yellow, her nose immoderately large, with a pair of hollow black eyes, in which glared a wild diabolical expression, that infused terror into her mind; but she endeavoured to conquer this sensation, reflecting that many persons beneath the most disgusting personal exterior concealed amiable dispositions, and requested her with her usual sweetness to conduct her to the room she was to sleep in, and that her portmanteau might be placed in it.

The old woman, who she learnt from
herself

herself was named Viprous, and the
 housekeeper, attended her to her apart-
 ment, and then asked if she would
 take some refreshment after her journey.
 Not having tasted any thing since break-
 fast but some biscuits and a little wine
 and water, Ermina assented, and Mrs.
 Viprous brought up a boiled chicken,
 which she partook of with her. They
 chatted some time together, and amongst
 several other questions which the former
 asked, was the name of the housekeeper's
 mistress, Colonel Rivers having forgotten
 to mention it in his letters. Mrs. Viprous
 replied that it was Errington, that she
 was an excellent lady, and was not ex-
 pected home in less than a week, and
 perhaps it might be a longer period, as
 it depended on her brother. Ermina now
 expressed a wish to retire to rest; and,
 as soon as the old housekeeper left her,
 hastily undressed, and having recom-
 mended herself to the protection of the
 Almighty,

Almighty, sunk almost immediately into a profound sleep.

The next morning when she awoke, she was surprised to find herself in a very antique apartment, which appeared to her immensely large (though it was not so), from having been lately accustomed to a very small one. It was furnished very handsomely, but in a style of antiquity such as she had rarely seen before, and in high preservation. She sat up in bed some time, and rubbed her eyes repeatedly before she could recollect herself, and when she did remember how she came there, she began to amuse herself in examining, as she lay in bed, the apartment and its gothic furniture, which had been the preceding night unobserved, as she was overcome with fatigue, and engaged in conversation with the house-keeper. The bed-furniture was green cut velvet, lined with pink satin, the
chairs

chairs corresponded with it, but had such high backs that they comparatively reached half way to the ceiling. Several looking-glasses ornamented the room, with plates so small, that the face alone could be perceived in it ; but they had immense frames, too broad even for a pier glass.

The house was exceedingly quiet, and no person seemed to be yet moving in it ; but Ermina, finding by her watch that it was past eight o'clock, and feeling no farther inclination to sleep, arose ; and, when she had dressed, tied on her hat and cloak, intending to take a walk by the side of a river which flowed close to that part of the building where she slept, which was built over it, as she discovered from the casement. On going however to open the chamber-door, to her great disappointment she found it fastened on the outside ; nor did she re-
collect

collect hearing the housekeeper fasten it when she left her, whence she concluded that she had returned to secure it when she was asleep. This excessive caution in her she was far from approving, as there was something disagreeable in the idea of being locked in; for in case of fire she could not, if she wished, escape, the casements being very narrow, and secured with iron-bars. Thus was it completely guarded to prevent her getting out; but there was no method of defence for herself, should thieves or any other person choose to intrude themselves: for the key was outside the lock, and she saw no bolt; and hitherto she had been accustomed, when in a strange house, to fasten her bed-room door, which she was now more particularly anxious to do, though it had escaped her the last night, from perceiving the strict guard placed on her, and disliking the countenance of the old housekeeper. While she was considering

ing in what manner she could best secure herself the following night, she discovered a strong iron staple in the door ; and her first thought was to look about the room for something strong to thrust through it, by which she could defend herself from any intruders. After a long search, she found, amongst some lumber in one of the closets, a piece of iron which appeared to have been formerly part of a window-bar. Wrapping it up in a handkerchief as the greatest treasure, she carefully placed it in her portmanteau, which she had just closed, when she heard her door slowly unlocked, and Mrs. Viprous enter. She looked rather astonished at seeing Ermina up and dressed, who, taking no notice of having observed that she was fastened in, wished her a good morning, and said she should like to take a walk in the grounds. The house-keeper replied that she would have the pleasure of accompanying her, though Er-

mina would willingly have been excused from this politeness, as there was something so terrific in the countenance of this woman, even whilst she strove to be obliging and good-humoured, that she felt quite uncomfortable in her presence. A very extensive park surrounded the house, except at that part where the river flowed near the walls, which were extremely low, being only two stories high; but it stood on a vast extent of ground as it was large, containing a prodigious number of rooms. After walking an hour, they went in to breakfast, and, when they finished, at Ermina's request, Mrs. Viprous shewed her the different apartments of the house, and the former observed to the housekeeper, that neither from the house nor grounds could she distinguish any view of Windsor, which rather surprised her, as she understood Lady Errington lived near it. "It is but a few miles off," replied Mrs. Viprous.

Viprous. " I should like, then," said Ermina, " to take a walk there, as I wish much to see Windsor and the adjacent country, having heard an enchanting description of it." At this proposal a deadly paleness overspread the countenance of the housekeeper ; and, malignantly glancing at Ermina, she answered her thus, in a hesitating voice : " My lady is a very singular character, miss, and never suffers any one beneath her roof to go beyond the park in her absence, and I cannot without incurring her displeasure permit you to walk farther than the limits of the grounds. When she returns home, you will do as you please." So strange and unaccountable a prohibition struck Ermina dumb, and she dared not, though she felt inclined, remonstrate against it, from the fear of losing the lucrative employment that awaited her. She therefore silently acquiesced, fearing, should she have expressed

pressed any disgust to Mrs. Viprous, that she would inform her lady of it, and prejudice her to her disadvantage.

Having heard without a murmur the remarkable commands of Lady Errington, she took her embroidery into one of the drawing-rooms, which had a very pleasant view from it, as it overlooked the river, and reflected as she worked on the eccentricity of her ladyship, and the poor style in which she appeared to live, for a woman of her fortune, having observed no other domestics in the house besides Mrs. Viprous, but a shabby looking country-girl, and the footman, who had attended her with the carriage. Nor could she imagine for which of the rooms the embroidered chairs were designed, as they would not look at all consistent with the rest of the antique furniture, that suited better with this ancient mansion, than any thing more modern, and she rather

rather supposed they were intended for a house in town, as it was probable Lady Errington had one. She worked the remainder of the day, and in the evening, as there was an excellent library, chose out a book, and walking into the park, intended, after she had tired herself with strolling about, to sit down under a tree, and read. But, a few minutes after she had quitted the house, she perceived the footman following her, and pretending not to observe it, she secretly remarked, that every path she took, he watched her, so that it was impossible for her to avoid being seen by him; and, when she seated herself down to read, he concealed himself behind a tree, keeping his eyes fixed on her. Never was any thing she thought so extraordinary as every circumstance which had happened since she had entered this house, and she bewildered herself in conjecturing the reason for her being observed with so much vigilance.

When she retired to rest, she recollected to fasten her door with the piece of iron ; and, not going immediately to sleep as on the former night, she heard some person, about half an hour after she had put out her light, steal softly, and lock the door on the outside, which made her feel delighted at having secured herself from any sudden intrusion, more particularly as she disliked the manners of Mrs. Viprous, and the appearance of every thing in the house.

Her imagination being wholly occupied by the mysterious circumstances that had met her observation, since she became an inhabitant of this ancient mansion, made her very restless ; and, when she fell asleep, pursued her in her dreams. After dreaming a variety of confused representations, she at length found herself in a large old-fashioned castle, through the apartments of which she swiftly fled
to

to escape from a ruffian, whose dagger was pointed at her breast. But in spite of all her efforts, he at length reached her, and was striking the fatal blow, when the terror of her mind awoke her from her sleep. At that instant a loud noise at her chamber door made her tremble; for, scarcely recovered from the effects of her dream, she shuddered lest the fearful vision should be converted to reality; and, rising up in bed to listen, she found that the sound which alarmed her was like the attempt of some person to burst open the door. Shivering with affright, she had, however, sufficient resolution to throw on a morning gown, and, approaching the door, in a tremulous voice which she endeavoured to make appear firm, asked who was there. No answer was returned, but she could distinguish a murmuring of different voices, and particularly that of Mrs. Viprous grumbling excessively. Some minutes

after the sounds ceased, and Ermina concluded they were retired. She then unclosed the shutters; and finding it impossible to compose herself again to sleep (which might likewise be unsafe), by the light of the moon which shone clearly, and the sky sprinkled with stars, she began dressing, that she might be prepared for whatever should happen. She then threw herself on the bed, not to seek repose, but to ruminate on what had passed, and she began to entertain an apprehension that had never gained admittance before in her breast, that some enemy of her peace had ensnared her to this house, perhaps for her destruction, though she could not conceive what species of revenge they proposed.

Perplexed with different surmises, she at length insensibly sunk into a slumber, and did not awake till a late hour, as no additional noise occurred to disturb her.

Upon

Upon recollection, what had passed in the night appeared more like a frightful dream than any thing real, and she would have imagined it was nothing more, had not her being dressed convinced her it was somewhat more than fancy. Feeling a violent pain in her head, she tried her chamber-door, and found it to her great joy unfastened on the other side, as she wished to take a walk in the park, hoping the air would relieve her headache. She therefore proceeded to the hall, meeting with no person in her way, a greater stillness than usual reigning throughout the house. This renovated her hopes, and thinking Mrs. Viprous had relaxed from her vigilance, and that she might opportunely escape from a confinement, which she dreaded was the prelude to some danger impending over her, she no sooner got into the park than she flew rather than walked to that

part of it where the paling was very low; for, knowing the gates were kept locked, her only chance of escape was to jump over the paling. She had just reached the object of her wishes, as she thought, unobserved, when the sound of footsteps, approaching the spot where she was, rendered her quite desperate, and eagerly getting on the paling, she hastily jumped from it; but unfortunately the ground that received her being on a slope, her foot slipped, and her head striking against the stump of a tree, she was quite stunned, and unconscious of all that passed around her, till she perceived herself in the parlour of the house from which she had attempted to escape, and Mrs. Viprous chafing her temples, who uttered an exclamation of joy at seeing her revive; but who, when she was perfectly recovered, reviled her in the most insulting terms for endeavouring to run away, saying

ing if she had succeeded, she would have been brought into a fine peck of troubles.

Ermina, faint and weak from the fall, and the disappointment of her hopes, could only answer her with tears, and sat so much absorbed in sorrow as scarcely to hear the bitter taunts and revilings of Mrs. Viprous, when the door opened, and in strutted the hideous form of Glencarnock. Ermina, whose eyes were reclined in grief, was unconscious of his entrance, till the too well known croaking of his voice made her start with horror, as she raised them to a being so obnoxious to her. The truth of her situation now suddenly flashed on her imagination, and she doubted not, but that, to gratify his implacable revenge, he had decoyed her to this house, and that she was totally in his power. But he did not give her much time for reflection; and, after

gazing at her a few minutes with his accustomed malicious grin, he approached and endeavoured to seize her hand, while she sunk abhorrent from him. Enraged at such an evident proof of her fixed dislike, which even terror would not let her disguise, he gave her such a look as Satan did at our first parents, when he beheld the mutual felicity they enjoyed in paradise, saying at the same time, " With all your scorn, you cannot now escape from my revenge. You have no one to step forward in your defence. Where is all your list of lovers flown? Happy you may consider yourself if I condescend to make you my wife ; and your receiving that honour will entirely depend on your own conduct, which, if I do not approve, I shall force you to be my mistress. Here you are excluded from all human assistance, though I imagine you think yourself good enough for even the Almighty to interpose in your behalf, and

and I believe I am right in supposing you so unfashionable as to believe in a future state." "Prophane, detested wretch!" exclaimed Ermina, "I would sooner embrace death in its most frightful form, than unite myself to a wretch, whose deformity of mind exceeds that of his person; nor have I any terrors on your account, convinced that that Providence which you ridicule will enable me to defend myself against every insult you will have the wickedness to offer me." "However, madam, you may despise my threats," replied Glencarnock, "you will find them not uttered in vain;" and with these words, and a glance of rage and indignation, he left her, followed by Mrs. Viprous. They were no sooner gone, than Ermina found all the spirit that had sustained her fled, and she mournfully endeavoured to think on some probable method of escaping from her hated and dangerous confinement, resolv-

ing

ing not to give way to sorrow, that she might fortify her mind to support without shrinking, whatever horrors were in store for her.

At dinner she was summoned by Glencarnock, who requested her to dine with him and his friend Brandon, a gentleman about fifty years of age, who affected a gravity of manners, but who was quite a veteran in vice, and a worthy associate for Glencarnock. Thinking it best no farther to irritate, but to amuse him by a more civil conduct, while she meditated in what manner to free herself from his power, she complied with his request. When dinner was concluded, and they had drunk a few glasses of wine, Ermina drinking only water, she offered to retire, as the insolence of their looks, and the indelicacies they intermixed in their conversation, shocked and confounded her. She was suffered to follow her own inclinations

clinations after a little difficulty, and, when she reached her room, became absorbed in reflections on her situation, no longer doubting that the alarm she had suffered in the night was caused by an attempt of Glencarnock's to enter her apartment, and by that means terrify her to consent to a marriage with him; and while she returned thanks to God for having inspired her, ignorant as she was of her danger, to defend herself against any nocturnal attack, she yet trembled from dread of a repetition of the attempt, in which he might be more successful. In vain she looked around her, she saw no method of escape, till, examining the windows of her apartment, a faint hope sprung up in her breast, at discovering one of the bars to be loose, and that, by exerting a little strength, she might easily remove it; yet, upon reflection, she considered that it would be of little use, as below there was nothing but water, and
that

that there was little probability of her escaping except through the park, which she knew by fatal experience was too vigilantly watched for her to be successful, in any endeavours she should make that way to fly from her persecutor. One circumstance had astonished her extremely, which was, that Glencarnock, poor as she knew him to be, should procure money sufficient to prosecute this scheme, which had been executed with so much success; and she was convinced some other person must have assisted him, nor on any other being could her suspicions so well rest, as on Mr. Brandon, whose appearance and manners were entirely characteristic of a libertine, whilst from the freedom of his discourse, and the impertinent glances of his eye, she had frequently at dinner shrunk from with disgust. She requested to be indulged in taking tea by herself, which, contrary to her expectations, was granted, but

but she soon after received a note from Glencarnock, in which he mentioned in the most peremptory style, that he only gave her till the next morning, to deliberate whether she would accept him or not, and that the answer she returned must determine her fate ; for if it was not favourable, no consideration should shield her from his anger, which would be productive of the most dreadful consequences to herself. Ermina trembled as she read this, but would not give way to despair, trusting to her innocence to gain her the protection of that almighty, and beneficent Being, who seldom fails to hear those who implore his mercy to defend them from the designing hand of villany. Firm and collected, from the justness of her cause, and an unshaken reliance on Providence, she fastened her door at night as before, placed several pieces of furniture against it, and threw herself on the bed with her clothes on.

Before

Before she went to sleep she took out her father's picture, contemplating this memorial of a beloved and valued parent with melancholy tenderness, as the remembrance of his affection and worth no time could weaken, though it had softened her regret.

CHAPTER VII.

Ungracious is the love reluctance yields ;
 And cold, cold even as marble, is the maid
 Who comes unwilling to another's arms.

HALL HARTSON.

ERMINA passed the night in undisturbed repose, and, early the next morning, after she had breakfasted, she was summoned by Glencarnock to meet him in the drawing-room. Obligated to comply, she attended him with an air of dignity, and in a firm, but mild manner, confessed her resolution never to be his wife. Notwithstanding his impudence and conceit, he was at first awed and confused by the collectedness of her deportment ;

portment ; but, soon recovering himself, he uttered the most horrid oaths and imprecations against her, using at the same time language so gross and indelicate, that even the most worthless man would hesitate to repeat it to the abandoned of the other sex. Pale with horror at such an instance of depravity, which her pure unsullied mind could never have supposed existed in human nature, she disengaged herself from his grasp, and rushing from him, reached her own apartment, where she presently secured herself, as he did not overtake her in time. She now trembled as if seized with an ague, when she heard his terrific growling voice swearing at her, and threatening the most dreadful revenge if she did not open the door ; for, though she knew herself capable of resisting such a weak deformed creature, yet she could not defend herself from being insulted by his gross language, with which, from his knowing how it wounded

her.

her delicacy, he would be continually assailing her ears. How melancholy was the reflection to her feeling mind, that so depraved a being, who was a disgrace to mankind, should exist; and that, endowed as he was with a good understanding, he should, brutally and unprovoked, insult one who had never offended him, but merely because unmerited misfortune had deprived her of her friends and fortune, and thrown her unprotected on the world! Fortunate are those, who, gliding quietly through life, are unacquainted with such characters, which, bad as they are represented, do not equal the original in wickedness: for the outline (if more forcibly drawn) would be still more harsh, and the reader sicken with disgust at the too faithful and horrid delineation.

Convinced that her apprehensions of Glencarnock were not groundless, she took her father's picture from her bosom, and

and kneeling down, the recollection of him at that moment drew tears of anguish down her cheek, which imperceptibly dropt on the portrait. With an emotion not to be described she hastily wiped them away, and raising her weeping eyes to heaven, exclaimed, " Spirit of my father, look down on thy unfortunate daughter, strengthen her in the hour of distress that she may be worthy of you, and rather may her existence terminate than dishonour be her portion !" After this affecting apostrophe, she replaced the picture, and arose from her knees with increased fortitude, as the consciousness of acting right inspired her, though naturally timid, with a courage she had never felt before. Oh virtue ! what is so beautiful as thou ? Though the severest struggles are encountered for thy attainment, yet how sweetly dost thou recompence thy votaries ! Even the abode of sorrow, where thou dwellest, is more happy than a palace

palace where luxury reigns, and where guilt embitters pleasure. Though tears now flow down the virtuous and unfortunate Ermina's cheek, yet will the least gleam of happiness make the rose of health again bloom on her lovely face, and fill her soul with a pure joy, which the wicked can never know.

She had been scarcely an hour alone, when she was again disturbed by the hoarse voice of Glencarnock, who commanded her once more to open the door. This she positively refused ; and, in consequence of this refusal, he ordered his servant to burst it open, and entered alone. His countenance too plainly evinced that he was come with a full design to insult her, and, all the spirit of the brave Montrose rising in her bosom, she flew to the fire-place, and seizing the poker, in a determined voice forbade him at the risque of his life to approach her. Miserable

rable as she was, she could with difficulty refrain from laughter at the ludicrous appearance of terror and astonishment he displayed at so formidable a rejection of his tender passion. But, his usual cunning restoring him to recollection, his courage returned, and supposing it was only done to alarm him, he attempted to take the poker from her. Unwilling to hurt him, though resolved not to relinquish it, they struggled for some time, when, in his too violent eagerness to wrest it out of her hand, he accidentally received a blow, which stunned him, and he fell to the ground, his head striking (as they were near the fire-place) against the sharp edge of the fender, which inflicted a deep wound that quite deprived him of his senses. Overcome with terror at the unintentional mischief she had occasioned, for he lay insensible, and covered with the blood that issued from his wounded head, almost frantic she darted down

down the staircase, and, as Glencarnock had ordered all the people in the house to keep out of the way, she left the house unmolested, and with a swiftness almost incredible, ran through the park, fortunately taking a different direction from the one she had chosen before; for it led to the high road, being only separated from it by the same low paling and sloping bank that had been so fatal to her.

Here she stopped, being at a loss in what manner to proceed, and was wringing her hands in an agony, when a gentleman passed by, of a very prepossessing appearance; his figure was elegant and noble, his features were handsome and expressive, but his complexion dark as an Indian's. The sight of so lovely a creature in such evident distress attracted his attention, which she no sooner observed, than, clasping her hands in an atti-

tude of supplication, she intreated him to save her. The gentleman addressed had too much spirit to disregard the intreaties of any woman, and particularly one so beautiful and interesting. He therefore climbed over the paling with an intention to assist her in getting over it, when the sight of Mr. Brandon, Mrs. Viprous, and the footman, running towards her, crying out, " She has committed murder ! She has committed murder !" exhausted with terror the little strength she had remaining, and faintly articulating that it was in self-defence, in endeavouring to escape from unjust confinement, she sunk lifeless into the stranger's arms.

When she recovered from the repeated fainting fits, into which she was thrown by the agitation she had suffered, she found herself in her own apartment with Mrs. Viprous, whose countenance seemed
to

to have relaxed somewhat of its severity, and enquired in as gentle accents as she could utter, how she found herself. Encouraged by kindness so unusual, and which she could not expect after what had passed, Ermina ventured to ask how Glencarnock was. At this question the countenance of Mrs. Viprous resumed its usual malignity (its complacency being only put on, from the fear if she looked severe, our heroine might relapse into her fainting fits again), and she replied that the wound in his head was in so dangerous a part that it was to be apprehended it would prove mortal, and Mr. Brandon being much alarmed, was gone to town for more skilful advice. Ermina made no comments on this intelligence, and Mrs. Viprous, finding her recovered, arose and quitted the room, locking the door after her, and leaving Miss Montrose to her own reflections, which were painful in the extreme, her brain disordered by

the variety of dreadful events that had taken place in so short a period ; and she was frequently obliged to hold her hand to her forehead, her head being bewildered, and her reason almost overturned with the agony of thought she endured.

In the evening the country girl, who was mentioned before as being the only female servant Ermina had seen besides Mrs. Viprous, brought up her tea, and, having cautiously shut the door, drew forth a letter, which she whispered Ermina she must not let any one know she had received. The latter opened it with a fluttering heart, and found it was from the gentleman she had seen in the morning. Its contents were to the following purport :

“ Madam,

“ Your appearance has prejudiced me
 “ so much in your favour, that, notwithstanding

“ withstanding the shocking account I
 “ received of you from the persons who
 “ dragged you back to the house, I be-
 “ lieve you very much injured, what
 “ they have said to be a villanous fabri-
 “ cation, and that you are, from the en-
 “ quiries I have made, in the power of
 “ extreme bad people. If you will send
 “ me, by Naney, the country servant
 “ (whom I have bribed, and persuaded
 “ to be in our interest), a slight sketch of
 “ your story and situation, I will endea-
 “ vour to release you by a stratagem,
 “ which, if not successful, I will then
 “ publicly with the officers of justice
 “ hasten to deliver you. That you may
 “ not be apprehensive of the person to
 “ whom you confide yourself, I will
 “ frankly tell you who I am. My name
 “ is Zemin Linmore, the son of an In-
 “ dian chief, born in the wilds of Ame-
 “ rica, whence I was taken by a Captain
 “ Linmore, to whom the chief, my fa-
 “ ther,

“ ther, had rendered some material ser-
 “ vices, and with his consent brought
 “ over to England, where he has had me
 “ educated as an European, and has taken
 “ care of my future fortune. Such, ma-
 “ dam, is the history of him who wishes
 “ to snatch you from destruction, and to
 “ be your protector, and who only waits
 “ for your consent to prove the sincerity
 “ of his professions.

“ I have the honour to be,

“ Madam,

“ Your most devoted and

“ Obedient servant,

“ Zemin Linmore.”

Ermina, being unable to procure pen
 and ink without creating suspicion, wrote
 with a pencil a concise account of her-
 self, which she gave to Naney when she
 came for the tea-things, and then re-
 flected with admiration on the spirit and
 gallantry of Linmore, who could be
 equalled

equalled by few Europeans in dignity of soul; for, alas! how many fairer skins cover the blackest hearts! and, though dark his face, how bright and pure his mind! Hope, which had long been estranged from her breast, now returned with her renovated spirits, and she flattered herself, did Glencarnock recover of his wound (which she fancied was not so dangerous as Mrs. Viprous had represented to alarm her), and she be released herself from his power, she might again know peace, else never.

Naney brought in breakfast the next morning, and Mrs. Viprous accompanied her, but retired after she had breakfasted; and, when Naney entered to remove the tea-things, Ermina saw her pull a large bundle from beneath her gown, which she thrust under the bed, slipping presently after a letter into her hand. Hastily tearing it open, Ermina read, that at the

first dawn of the next morning, she must be ready to escape, as Linmore would have a boat waiting under her window to receive her, and had sent a ladder of ropes, which she must fasten to her window, after removing the iron bar Naney had informed him was loose. The boat was only to row them across the river, as he had a chaise and four to receive them when they landed; and she learnt likewise from Naney, that Mr. Linmore had given her some laudanum to put in the beer which Mrs. Viprous always drank in great quantities every night, hoping by this method to counteract her vigilance, as she would be asleep and hear nothing of what was passing.

Glencarnock continued as ill on this day as the preceding one, and Mr. Brandon, of whom Ermina was now most afraid, did not return from London. Mrs. Viprous eat her supper at ten o'clock in
Ermina's

Ermina's room, who, knowing her propensity to drunkenness, persuaded her to drink more than usual, and to take some brandy, telling her as she had complained of a pain in her stomach, and did not look well, it would do her good. The quantity of beer and brandy she had taken, aided by the laudanum infused in it, completely stupified her; and, having only sufficient command over herself to crawl to her own bed-room, she entirely forgot to lock Ermina's door.

A few minutes after, Naney, who had been watching all the time, crept softly into the apartment of Miss Montrose, and told her the old drunken beast was snoring away. She then assisted her in packing up a bundle of papers, and some trinkets of value which Ermina took from the casket that had belonged to her father, and which she had never had the resolution to open but once since his

15

death,

death, and as they were of importance to her, she could not bear the idea of leaving them behind, though Linmore had assured her, he would force Glencarnock to produce and restore all that belonged to her, that she might not burthen herself with any baggage, as she would find it troublesome in making her escape. In respect to her clothes she followed his advice, and, securing the empty casket in her portmanteau, the key of which she put in her pocket, she sat down with Naney to await the first dawn of morning. They conversed together for some time, the anxiety she suffered preventing her taking any repose; and in the course of conversation Ermina promised to procure Naney another place, or take her to live with her, if any good fortune should be her future lot. This pleased the poor girl, who seemed to have an excellent heart, her fidelity having already been tried; and our heroine rewarded

rewarded her with her two remaining guineas, leaving herself but half a one. She now began to feel very drowsy, and was advised by Ermina to go to sleep, as she feared if she took no repose at night, her apparent want of rest in the morning might infuse suspicion of her being accessory to her escape in the mind of Mrs. Viprous, and induce her to wreak her vengeance on her ; a thought which made her shudder, as she could not endure the idea of having occasioned the sufferings of any one.

Naney had not been long sunk into a peaceful slumber, when Ermina, whose spirits were in the most perturbed state, began to be extremely depressed, no sound meeting her ear but the howling of the wind, which was so high, that she thought it presaged an approaching storm. This conjecture was but too well founded ; for in a few hours arose the most

violent tempest, the rain beat furiously against the casements, it thundered loudly, whilst the flashes of lightning followed each other so quickly that the room was quite illuminated. She trembled and turned pale, dreading lest the storm should awaken Mrs. Viprous, and prevent her departure, as it continued with unabated fury for some hours ; but towards day-break it was lessened, though the wind still roared round the ancient mansion, and whistled through its spacious apartments. Bent low by the storm were the trees, that had before proudly raised their heads to the skies, and many were torn up by the roots. Dark mists covered the summit of the hills, when Ermina, at the first dawn of morning, endeavoured in vain to discern from the casement, the approach of the boat that was to convey her away. Eagerly she panted to behold it, regardless of the wintry blasts and the rain, which poured in torrents
on

on her head, and drenched her beautiful tresses which hung luxuriantly disordered by the wind. In vain did Naney, whom the storm had at length awakened, implore her to withdraw from viewing this desolation of nature, and endeavour to compose herself; but, gentle and easy to persuade as she generally was, her heavy and repeated misfortunes had now made such an entire revolution in her frame, that she was not to be moved; for the fatigue and agitation she had undergone these last three days had created a nervous fever, which not having been attended to had affected her head. This, added to the terror she suffered from the fear of being surpris'd by Mrs. Viprous, and again perhaps prevented from eloping, rendered her almost delirious. Poor Naney, who was already attached to Ermina, won by her irresistible sweetness, was miserable at beholding her in such a distracted condition, and earnestly prayed
that

that Linmore might soon arrive to snatch her from the danger, with which she was threatened, as he was beyond the time he had appointed to be there.

Another hour passed in increasing agitation, as the early part of the morning was declining away, when a sudden exclamation of joy from Ermina explained to Naney that the boat was in view. They both began eagerly to remove the iron-bar, fastened the rope-ladder, and in a few minutes Linmore was beneath the window, and ascended to the apartment. By every argument in his power he strove to calm the perturbation of Miss Montrose, and having in some degree succeeded, he secured the ladder more firmly ; and, entreating her to be courageous, assisted her in descending to the boat which she reached in safety. They then waved their hands to Naney, who was anxiously looking after them, and the
boatmen

boatmen Linmore had hired, seizing their oars, rowed with all their strength, till they landed them on the other side of the river, where a chaise and four waited to receive them. They were no sooner got into it and out of sight, than Naney drew up the ladder, which she concealed as before, and, creeping softly to her own chamber, undressed herself and went to bed, to elude all suspicion from the mind of Mrs. Viprous of her having been acquainted with the flight of Ermina.

CHAPTER VIII.

————— Nor purpose gay,
 Amusement, dance or song, he sternly scorns;
 For happiness and true philosophy
 Are of the social, still, and smiling kind.
 This is the life, which those who fret in guilt,
 And guilty cities, never knew ; the life,
 Led by primeval ages, uncorrupt,
 When angels dwelt, and God himself, with man !

THOMSON.

WHEN they were seated in the carriage, Linmore informed Ermina, that, if she had no objection, he proposed to place her for the present under the protection of a worthy quaker and his wife, who were his particular friends, and the most benevolent, hospitable, people that
 ever

ever existed. Having received the outlines of her story from him, they had intreated him to bring her to their house, and to request her in their name to make it her home, as long as was agreeable to her. More obliged than she could express, Ermina gratefully thanked him for his goodness and consideration, as, destitute of money, she would not have known where to go, or in what manner to have supported herself. She learnt from her generous deliverer, that the house where she had been confined was called Eamont-hall, situated in Hertfordshire, about ten miles from Mr. Fairfield's, whither they were travelling, and that, from her having had no suspicion of the treachery practised on her, she was easily deceived into a supposition of being near Windsor. He entreated her not to be in the least alarmed at the proximity of Mr. Fairfield's to Eamont hall, as neither Glencarnock (if he recovered) or any of his

his infamous confederates would presume to molest her, since they found their schemes discovered, and that she had friends to come forward in her defence. He likewise quieted her apprehensions of Glencarnock's death, saying there could be no doubt of her being proved fully innocent of having caused it, though in fact he was convinced that he was only represented dangerously ill to terrify her, as Brandon and himself intended to take advantage of her alarm. They drove with great rapidity, which brought Ermina and Linmore in a few hours to Mr. Fairfield's, where she was received with the utmost kindness by the good quaker and his wife Kezia, who, with the genuine spirit of Christianity and true benevolence, shewed her every attention. Perceiving how much she was exhausted and affected by her recent sufferings, she insisted that she should go instantly to bed, and, attending her there herself, she made her

her take some warm wine and water, drew the curtains round her, closed the shutters, and left her to repose.

The pleasure of retiring to rest in security Ermina had not for a long time she thought experienced: for intervals passed in sorrow appear more tedious than those of joy. Sweetly therefore did she sink to sleep; for the balm of kindness such as the gentle quaker administered had not for a long time been poured into her wounded breast. She slept all day, and only sat up for an hour in the evening, while her bed was being made, Kezia not suffering her to leave it for a longer period, as she still continued feverish. In consequence of following her advice, she found herself almost well the next morning, nothing remaining of her indisposition but a tremor of the nerves, at the slightest noise, caused by the constant agitation she had suffered for some months past.

past. She received an agreeable surprise at beholding her portmanteau placed in one corner of the room, Linnmore having returned in the course of the last day to Eamont-hall with two or three persons to demand it, and Glencarnock and his confederates not daring to refuse, it was instantly given up. This friendly attention delighted Ermina, who would otherwise have been much distressed for a change of apparel, having none with her but what she wore, which was now thrown aside for a clean white morning dress; and, concealing her beautiful hair under a fine lace cap, she went down the picture of neatness and beauty, to pay her respects to her hospitable entertainers.

They were preparing for breakfast, and viewed her with admiration, so much better did she look than the day before, whilst she on her part was no less charmed with

with their goodness and simplicity. Jeremiah and Kezia Fairfield were between forty and fifty years of age, cheerful, sensible, and good-humoured, very much attached to each other, and to their religion; but, although the most rigid observers of the customs, dress, and manners of their own sect, they were indulgent to people of a different persuasion, fond of their society if they were worthy characters, and ready without pride or ostentation to assist every object in distress; in truth, they resembled the good Samaritan. They were exceedingly rich, and had but one child, a banker in London, who was making a rapid fortune, and with him they always spent the winter months. He was married, and had several children. The house where they now dwelt in Hertfordshire was their own property, and situate a quarter of a mile from the romantic and picturesque village of Hartwell, of which it commanded
a view.

a view. It was a plain handsome edifice, with a sloping lawn in front, environed with groves of trees ; and at a little distance was seen a narrow river, sweetly winding through the meadows, and surrounded with corn-fields and coppice-woods on the declivity of the hills. Linmore had been known to the Fairfields ever since he was a boy, and they had the highest opinion of his heart and understanding. He had consulted with them respecting the removal of Ermina from Eamont-hall, which they advised to have conducted as quietly as possible, judging very properly, that without the greatest necessity no woman should suffer herself to be made the subject of public conversation, and this she must inevitably have encountered, if Linmore had called in the assistance of the officers of justice to make Glencarnock give her up. The stratagem that was practised, had, therefore, the warm approbation of the Fairfields,

fields, though it had nearly failed from the storm's obliging Linmore to bring the boat an hour later than was his first intention, which made him by mere chance escape discovery, and being prevented from carrying off his fair prize.

Ermina in the peaceful habitation of these worthy quakers, soon regained her serenity of mind; for, in addition to their kindness and the tranquil life she led, she had the satisfaction of hearing that Glencarnock was perfectly recovered of his wound, and she gratefully thanked Heaven for exonerating her from the unpleasant reflection of having caused (though innocently) a fellow-creature's death, however criminal and undeserving he might be. She had no wants; for her amiable friends had in the most delicate manner presented her with a fifty-pound note, which she scrupled not to receive,

receive, knowing how much they were endowed with the gifts of fortune. They had likewise taken Naney into their service; as her mind was not contaminated (being naturally good) with the bad scenes she had witnessed when with Mrs. Viprous, with whom she had lived but a short time, and promised, when her rusticity was tworn off (being lately come from the west of England), to be a very excellent servant. She was hired purposely to wait on Ermina; and this instance of respect was more pleasing to her than any other. Mr. Fairfield and Kezia had indeed formed the warmest and strongest attachment to our heroine, not only for her own amiable qualities, but from an evident resemblance she bore in person and disposition to a daughter they had lost about her age; and when she once in a frolick amused herself in putting on Mrs. Fairfield's prim cap and
sober

sober-coloured gown, the tears which bedewed their cheeks, proved how much she resembled their dear lost Ruth.

Ermina, whose heart was open as the day, soon confided to Kezia the chief events of her life, who consoled her with the hope, that time would develope to her friends the falsehood of the calumnies, propagated to the destruction of her fame, and feel remorse for having ever doubted her integrity, thus making her virtue appear with more lustre from having been for a time obscured, and her patience and resignation meet the reward it deserved. Though the good quakers had not much acquaintance with the fashionable world, yet to gratify her anxiety, Mrs. Fairfield caused some enquiries to be made relative to the families of Sir John Assop, Lord Darlington, and Sir Charles Melross, but could learn nothing satisfactory, except that it was

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reported, though not as a certain fact, that Sir Charles was dead, that he had not died immediately, but lingered a long time in consequence of his wounds, and, upon being removed to Wales, from the idea that the change of air would be beneficial to him, he had expired soon after his arrival there.

This intelligence of Sir Charles, which she feared was but too true, sensibly affected Ermina, but the soothing consolation she received from her friend made her feel it less acutely. But, though calm and resigned, a soft melancholy tinged her countenance, which, while it rendered her beauty less dazzling, made her more interesting to the feelings. She did not as before subdue the heart, but gently attracted it, seeming indifferent and ignorant of her own charms. Alas! sorrow had banished the happy thoughtless ideas of youth, notwithstanding she
now

now only approached her nineteenth year; yet it rendered her more amiable, correcting the exuberant vivacity of her disposition, and softening the high spirit she possessed from nature. Endowed with accomplishments the most shining, and of which she was not the least vain, but as unaffected as lovely, it is not surprising that she was only seen to be admired, and known but to be loved with the most ardent affection, by every mind of worth and discernment. But vain is virtue or merit to shelter any one in this world, however deserving, from unkindness and sorrow, the possessor of worth being in general more frequently wounded than others, as the sensibility implanted in the feeling heart, makes the arrows of malevolence and envy penetrate deeper into the gentle bosom of innocence, from whence the poison is more difficult to be extracted.

Her favourite walk was to the village of Hartwell, which was situated on a hill at the bottom of which flowed a river, on whose banks was a small hanging wood, that reached from the church-yard, which was most romantically situated, commanding a sweet rural view. The village contained but few houses, chiefly belonging to gentlemen, and was almost environed with corn-fields and rich meadow land. Ermina delighted to wander through the church-yard, which was planted all round with trees, and read the rustic memorials of departed spirits, which inspired her with moral reflections; or, seated on the fragment of a tomb-stone, watch the last parting rays of the sun as it slowly sunk behind the trees, diffusing its gold and purple light in the western sky. Zemin Linmore was frequently her companion, and entered into the enthusiasm with which the beauties of nature and glories of the creation always

ways inspired her. Jeremiah and Kezia Fairfield seldom accompanied them, preferring to walk in their own grounds, and amuse themselves with their garden and greenhouse, where they had an extensive collection of rare and valuable plants, to rear and cultivate which was their supreme pleasure, a pleasure both rational and innocent, than which it is to be lamented that mankind should ever have any amusements more harmless. This worthy pair kept very little company in the country, as they found it unnecessary for their happiness, having such numberless resources in themselves, that time never hung heavy on their hands. Reading, drawing, botany, and music, now Ermina was with them, occupied the greater part of the day. They had purchased a harp and piano-forte for her, as they were fond of hearing her play, and these amusements, varied with walking, riding, work, gardening, and seek-

ing out objects on whom to exercise their benevolence, left them no time for lassitude; they were always cheerful, contented, and grateful to God for the blessings he had bestowed on them.

The farther insight Ermina had into their characters, the more she esteemed and loved them, thinking herself under their protection the most enviable of human beings. The only persons she had ever known, that bore any resemblance to them, were Mr. and Mrs. Heywood, to whom she often thought of writing to justify herself, as she feared she might have been represented to them in the vilest colours, and to know what was become of her poor Terefe. But timidity restrained her, and the apprehension of having her peace of mind, which she had now recovered, disturbed by some severe animadversions, if they should not credit her assertions of innocence, when they
were

were acquainted with her situation and misfortunes, the recollection of which beguiled her of many tears. The good Kezia always looked at her with anxiety, when she perceived the traces of them on her cheek, and sympathised with her, on the revival of ideas so painful to her.

About two months after Ermina had been with the Fairfields, they lost the society of Zemin Linmore, who was obliged to conclude his visit, being necessitated to return to London, where his friend Captain Linmore required his presence. His absence was regretted by the whole family, as the excellence of his understanding, his good humour, and politeness of manners, rendered him a most agreeable companion, and the services he had performed for Ermina inspired her with gratitude and esteem, which, added to the deference he always paid her, could not fail of pleasing, as

it evidently proceeded from a sincere wish to gain her good opinion. The worthy quakers lamented the dark shade of his complexion, as it frequently brought him, from his high spirit, into unpleasant situations, and when Ermina walked out with him, from the contrast they formed, they attracted the notice of every person they met. This in the country was of little consequence, but in town, friend Kezia said, she must avoid being seen with him, as it would draw upon her the observation of strangers, which to a modest maiden was unpleasant and troublesome. Ermina assented to the justness of this remark, saying, that not only in this, but in circumstances of more moment, she would ever be guided by her superior wisdom. " Truly, my love," replied her good friend, " thy humility pleaseth me, but thee hast understanding enough of thine own, to guide thee with honour through
the

the rough path of life. Yet art thou more praise-worthy not to disdain the advice of thy superiors in years and experience, and may the blessing of God attend thee to reward thy virtue, and keep thee from the snares of the wicked ones."

Summer soon passed away, and the gloom of winter began to spread a melancholy tint over the country. Heavy rains prevented them from quitting the house, whilst the prospect from its windows was so chill and dreary, that the Fairfields resolved, though it was a little before the usual time, to begin their annual excursion to their son's house in Finsbury-square. They commenced their journey on the twenty-second day of November, and their residence being but twenty miles from London, they arrived there in the evening. Here they were

welcomed by Matthew and Elizabeth Fairfield his wife, with hospitality and affection, and enjoyed the pleasure of being seated in an elegant drawing-room by a blazing fire, after travelling so many hours in the cold. Matthew Fairfield trod in the steps of his excellent parents, and Elizabeth was pretty and good-natured, but not so strict an observer of the primitive dress as her mother-in-law, conforming more to the modern taste. They had four fine children, whom Jeremiah and Kezia viewed with delight, whilst Ermina contemplated with satisfaction this pleasing picture of domestic felicity, and the interesting sight of a family so united. She had seen Mr. Matthew Fairfield and his wife before, and received the utmost kindness from them, as they were always anxious to please every one who was dear to their father and mother. Linmore called to pay his respects

spects soon after their arrival, and Ermina could not avoid remarking an extraordinary change in his countenance and manners, from animation and frankness to melancholy and reserve. It was observed by the rest of the family as well as herself, nor could any of them account for it, and, as he came but seldom, it was more difficult to divine the cause of this alteration. A conduct so opposite to his former behaviour, as he used to be a constant visitor, surprised them extremely; and Jeremiah could not refrain one day from asking him, if any part of the family had given him offence, saying if that was the case he was convinced it was quite unintentional. This question seemed to agitate him exceedingly, but he assured Mr. Fairfield, that not any thing of the kind had occurred, every part of the family being loved and esteemed by him, and more particularly

K 6 himself

himself and his wife, excusing the scarceness of his visits, by his frequent unavoidable engagements with Captain Linmore. This satisfied the good quaker, and no more was said on the subject.

CHAP.

CHAPTER IX.

—— Thus the warm youth,
 Whom love deludes into his thorny wilds
 Thro' flowery-tempting paths, or leads a life
 Of fever'd rapture, or of cruel care;
 His brightest flames extinguish'd all, and all
 His lively moments running down to waste.

THOMSON.

MR. Matthew Fairfield visited numberless families, but chiefly among the quakers. Ermina was of most of their parties, though she frequently declined them to read or play to her friend Kezia, who seldom mixed in company, but confined herself to her own apartments, her son having dedicated (as his house was very large) a bed-chamber and sitting-room entirely

entirely to her use, where she might retire, whenever she felt not disposed to meet an enlarged society. Ermina's attention to her on these occasions pleased the elder Mrs. Fairfield more than any thing else, as there were few young people (whatever claims there might be on their gratitude) who would voluntarily deprive themselves of pleasure, when it was in their power, to amuse an old woman. She studied therefore to reward the goodness of heart evinced by Miss Montrose, by making her continually partake of some amusement or other; and, as they were intimately acquainted with a lady of the name of Ballendan, whose religion was that of the church of England, Kezia placed her under her protection when she wished her to go to the play, opera, &c. &c. Mrs. Ballendan was a widow of large fortune, quite an inoffensive character, one who would do neither harm or good to any single being,

being, of an even temper, yet weak understanding, and led a very fashionable life, not from any fondness for it, but merely because she thought it was necessary for her to do so, as she was rich. Being exceedingly good humoured, she was a frequent chaperon to many young unmarried ladies, who liked her in preference to any one else, as they were under no restraint in her company. She was continually giving grand entertainments, and invited Ermina one evening to a splendid rout and ball she gave, at which all the first nobility in town were to be present. From the fear of meeting any of her former acquaintance, Ermina would gladly have been excused from going, but was over-ruled by Kezia Fairfield, who wished her to be present, thinking it would afford her pleasure.

On this occasion she was dressed with that taste and simple elegance which always

ways distinguished her from every other woman. She wore a train petticoat and jacket of white crape, over white satin completely trimmed with the finest blond-lace, and her luxuriant glossy ringlets were ornamented and confined with the most elegant diamond combs, a present from her friend Kezia. A bunch of snow drops, emblematical of her purity, were placed in her bosom, and thus plainly, yet elegantly attired, she looked so strikingly lovely, that the amiable quaker anticipated the admiration she would meet with. Nor was she mistaken, for she no sooner entered Mrs. Ballendan's drawing-room, than every eye was fixed on her alone, though there were many beautiful women present, who in regularity of features might surpass her; but none in whose person and countenance so much loveliness, grace, and sweetness, were united. The gaze of curiosity and murmur of approbation that she encountered

at

at her entrance, little as she thought of herself, she could not avoid observing, as the audible whispers of admiration passing around, were as numerous as the glances she received. The confusion she experienced heightened the rich glow of her cheek, and made her look more dazzlingly beautiful. But the pointed attention of Mrs. Ballendan soon dispelled her agitation, and, having conducted her to three young ladies of her acquaintance, that lady left her to pay her compliments to some of the company that were just arrived. These young ladies, the Misses Somerton, were of the usual description of fashionable girls, full of pretty small-talk, satire, and conversation about dress, and Ermina had formed an acquaintance with them from frequently meeting together at Mrs. Ballendan's. The pertinence of their remarks on the various singular characters, who were perceptible amongst the large party

party assembled before them, and formed a striking contrast to the handsome and elegant associated with them, diverted her exceedingly. As they were gaily laughing at a most ridiculous old woman, who, though sixty years old, and immoderately fat, was dressed in the same juvenile style as a girl of fifteen, Mrs. Balandan approached with an elderly gentleman, whose dignified air bespoke him a man of the first rank. He was near seven feet high, his countenance fair and florid, and his hair white as snow, which gave him a most venerable appearance, as he was apparently seventy years of age. Having at his request been introduced to Ermina, he entered into conversation with her, and there was something in his appearance that interested her so much, that she felt an unaccountable anxiety to gain his good opinion, and flattered herself she had succeeded, as he seemed to take pleasure in conversing with

with her. Whilst they were chatting quite familiarly, a fashionable young man approached, who exclaimed: "By heavens, my lord, you are guilty of a confounded monopoly, we shall all detest you for it." "True, Mr. Flippant," rejoined Ermina's companion, "I think I have reason to be vain of the post of honour I have gained, and of supplanting in this lady's favour all the beaux and fops in the room. However, I brave your envy, being such a conceited old fellow as to imagine, that Miss Montrose prefers me with my silver locks to all the Adonis's present." Ermina smiled at his lordship's good-humoured raillery, and an animated conversation was kept up between him and Flippant, that highly entertained her, whilst she admired this cheerfulness, so rare in a man of his age. He remained with her the greater part of the evening, as she danced but little, and he perceived she took more pleasure in his society.

than

than in that of any other person ; for the flattery and attention of the other gentlemen gave her no pleasure. Her heart, torn and wounded as it had been, and its affection, solely placed on one object, sickened at the love and admiration of others, disliking to hear of passions she could not encourage, and sentiments to which she could make no return. She wished much to know who this venerable nobleman was, that had charmed her by his elegant and pleasing manners, but she had no opportunity of enquiring of Mrs. Ballendan before Mr. Fairfield's carriage came for her ; and throughout the evening she had not once heard his name mentioned by any one, but only distinguished by the appellation of my lord. She was therefore obliged to restrain her eager curiosity till she saw Mrs. Ballendan again, who had so hastily pronounced his name when she introduced him that her ear could not catch the sound.

Two or three mornings after, that lady called in Finsbury-square on a morning visit to Mrs. Fairfield, and Ermina then anxiously enquired who that nobleman was that had so much interested her. "Do you mean the Earl of Valancey?" replied Mrs. Ballendan; "I thought I had introduced you to him." "You certainly did," answered Ermina, "but there was such a buz of voices round us, as prevented my distinguishing what you said." "I assure you," continued Mrs. Ballendan, "he asked several questions, and was very curious to know every thing relative to you, and looked surprised when I said your name was Montrose." Ermina in vain conjectured the motive of this surprise, concluding at last that it could only be mere fancy in Mrs. Ballendan.

The following evening she accompanied Mrs. Ballendan to the opera, and had been but a short time seated in the box, when

when Lord Valancey, who had seen them and bowed from the other side of the house, entered to make his compliments. He seated himself by Ermina, and conversed with her for some time with great interest, when suddenly, his eyes glancing by chance on her mother's picture, which was suspended on her neck, he said in a laughing tone—"Good heavens, do you wear your own likeness as an ornament? for though you could not have worn the portrait of any one so handsome, the circumstance is rather unusual." Ermina smiled at this observation, and said he was quite in an error, as it was the picture of her mother, and, unfastening it from her neck, she gave it him to look at. He examined it for some time with great attention, and then looked on the reverse, which contained the hair of Mrs. Montrose, and the initials E. B. which he no sooner observed, than his countenance underwent an evident alteration, and in

an agitated voice, he demanded, apologizing for his curiosity, her mother's maiden name. This question, and the perturbation of his manner, made Ermina regard him with surprise, whilst with the utmost sweetness she replied that it was Belvidere. She had no sooner uttered these words, than her astonishment increased at seeing him turn pale as death, and alarmed, she feelingly enquired if he found himself ill. Casting a melancholy glance at her, he answered in the affirmative, and saying the house was too warm for him, and that he should be obliged to go out for air, he hastily wished them good-night, and left the box, leaving Ermina petrified with his strange behaviour. She could not, on reflection, credit the truth of his sudden illness, rather imagining it was the sight of the picture, which, recalling some painful event to his remembrance, had thus affected his spirits, as he appeared but a few minutes before

before extremely well. But she appeared doomed to meet with people, for whose singular conduct she could find no explanation, and, on mentioning the circumstance to Kezia Fairfield, when she returned home, the good quaker thought as well as herself, that the agitation evinced by Lord Valancey was exceedingly mysterious.

Ermina had, immediately after her arrival in Finsbury-square, called in Duke-street on her late landlady Mrs. Brown, and having made her a present for the care she had taken of her baggage, ordered it to be sent to her, which was accordingly done the next morning. She likewise took the precaution of desiring her, should any one make enquiries after her, not to let them know where she lived, and Mrs. Brown promised faithfully to observe her request, saying she hoped Miss Montrose would sometimes do

do her the favour of making her a visit. This Ermina promised with pleasure to comply with, as she could do it without inconvenience, (and had too much gratitude in her disposition to forget the civility and kindness, she had received from her worthy landlady), Mr. Fairfield's carriage being always at her service. Otherwise it would have been scarcely practicable for her to have called often in Duke-street, as its great distance from Finsbury-square must have rendered it expensive and fatiguing.

Ermina was seated one day in the carriage before a shop in Fleet-street, which Kezia had entered to make some purchases, when Zemin Linmore, whom she had not seen for some weeks, passed by, and recollecting the coach, he looked into it to see if it contained any person he knew. Perceiving Ermina, he bowed, and came up to speak to her, and, whilst

they were conversing, Mrs. Fairfield came out of the shop, and asked him if he was disengaged, to enter the carriage with her. Without hesitating, he accepted this invitation, and as they drove along, mentioned in the course of conversation that he should in a fortnight quit England for the East-Indies, having been offered a very lucrative post there, where in a few years he expected to make a large and rapid fortune. Both ladies expressed surprise and regret at this intelligence, and Ermina very innocently saying, that she had now discovered the cause of his late melancholy—attributing it to the idea of quitting England, which, from his having been so many years in it, must be the same to him as his native country—he heaved such deep sighs, and looked so dejected, that she blushed at her inadvertence, in touching on a subject thus nearly connected with his peace of mind.

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He staid dinner, and the importunities of the Fairfields at length prevailed with him to give evidently a reluctant consent to pass some days with them, previous to his departure. Ermina was conversing one morning about him to Elizabeth Fairfield, and remarking how much he was altered, when the latter significantly smiled, and said, many others had made the same observation, adding that she knew a circumstance relating to him that would explain it, but before she disclosed it she must require her promise never to divulge it; though I forget, she continued laughing, that policy will incline thee to be silent on this subject. Ermina was surpris'd at this introduction, but made no comments, promised secrecy, and Mrs. Fairfield proceeded: " Since thy residence with my father and mother-in-law, Linmore and my husband went to make a visit of a few weeks to the former's friend and patron Captain Linmore, at

his country-seat near Hampton. The house being at that time very full of company, they both slept in a double-bedded room; and one night whilst he was asleep, my husband was disturbed by a murmuring kind of noise, and, listening very attentively, heard Linmore talking in his sleep, and the word "Ermina" repeated very distinctly; and a little while after, "dear, dear, girl," was mentioned. Upon which my husband began to rouse, comprehending what was implied by those broken speeches, having frequently heard Linmore speak very passionately of thee, but supposed he could not be in earnest, as the difference of colour must preclude all hopes of success, till he was confirmed in the truth of Linmore's feelings, by his rest being disturbed from thinking so intently on this subject. And now again let me intreat thee," said Mrs. Fairfield, "not to take notice of what I have imparted to thee, as my husband insisted

insisted on my secrecy, fearful thou wouldst be displeased ; but I thought it would entertain thee to hear of the passion thou hast innocently created." " Indeed, my dear Mrs. Fairfield," replied Ermina, " it would have quite a contrary effect if I was certain he had really formed a warm attachment to me, as I could not support the idea of having, though unknowingly, implanted a thorn in a bosom of so much worth, which it would never be in my power to extract ; for the difference of complexion, supposing my heart disengaged, must banish all hopes of encouragement ; and I am convinced he has too much sense and humility ever to think of offering himself to my acceptance : but I hope it is all a mistake." " I am convinced it is not," rejoined Mrs. Fairfield, " as he told my husband 'twas despair of success in his fatal love, that made him so wretched ; and I make no doubt, but that his going

to the East-Indies is merely to fly from the sight of thee, which he cannot avoid while in England, and that he trusts to conquer his passion by absenting himself, perhaps for ever, from it." "I wish you had not given me this information," said Ermina, "for I am quite miserable on his account; and should be still more so, did I not flatter myself that it is a boyish flame, which, meeting with nothing to feed it, will soon be extinguished; and you may likewise rest assured, that not any circumstance relative to what you have told me shall ever pass my lips." From the moment that Mrs. Fairfield had divulged this secret to her, Ermina always felt confused in the company of Linmore, and could not avoid wishing that the time for his departure was arrived, as to see each other was only productive of mutual pain, Ermina suffering as much from pity as Linmore from love. Yet, from his general conduct she could
draw

draw no inference of his attachment, so very guarded was he, never presuming to take advantage of the many opportunities he had of being alone with her, and there was something so noble in his being conscious of his colour, and devoid of all vanity, that those acquainted with his unfortunate passion were struck with admiration and esteem. But an event, which it was impossible to suspect would happen, and which was one of those cruel accidents no human prudence could prevent, gave Ermina the cruel certainty of being beloved by him, and rent her heart with an anguish she had hoped to have been spared.

She was conversing one afternoon, when alone with him, about the East Indies, till interrupted by Mrs. Fairfield's eldest boy, nearly four years old, who came into the room, with something in his hands which he held behind his back,

saying, " Nobody knows what I have found. Thee may look, Ermina, but Linmore sha'n't." She accordingly examined it to please the child, and to her great astonishment beheld a likeness of herself, whilst the little boy, laughing, exclaimed, " 'Tis a very pretty picture, and what Linmore wears about his neck, as I've seen him when he has been dressing himself." To paint Ermina's consternation at this speech is impossible, and she began looking at the flowers on the carpet, not daring to raise her eyes, as Linmore was seated close to her, to whom the child said, restoring the picture—" There, thee may take it now, but thee ought to give me a pretty plaything for finding it." Not a word all this time did Zemin utter, but she heard him sigh deeply, arise and walk to the window, which somewhat relieved her, and she hesitated whether to leave the room directly or not, when the little boy, who was very fond
of

of him, cried out, after looking in his face, " Poor Linmore is crying; he is very unhappy;" and running over to Ermina, began pulling her by the gown, saying, " Come and make it up with him, come and make it up with him; if he has been naughty I'm sure he will not do so any more, he will be very good." " Oh, God!" he exclaimed, " this is more than I can bear!" and, disengaging himself from the child, who tried to detain him, he left the room without once casting his eyes towards Ermina.

When he was gone, she seemed as one awakened from a stupor, the shock she received from this unexpected discovery, occasioned by such a simple incident, having sensibly affected her. " What a fate is mine!" she said, while the tears rolled down her cheeks; " new sources of woe continually spring, where I least ex-

pect them. Unfortunate Linmore, a little time will, I hope, remove your uneasiness, and take from me the painful idea of having wounded a heart of so much worth."

From this fatal period they avoided each other as much as possible, and no other affecting circumstance happening from that time till his departure, to plunge her into any additional sorrow, she felt less uneasiness on his account. The day previous to his quitting them to embark for India, she confined herself, under pretence of an head-ache, to her apartment; for though he had said he should avoid the pain of taking a formal leave of his friends, by setting off early the next morning, she knew that the sight of her would be a great trial to his feelings; and she congratulated herself on having thought on a method to spare them.

Ermina

Ermina was no sooner dressed on the following morning, than one of the maid-servants brought her a letter, which, she said, Mr. Linmore had desired to have delivered to her as soon as she was up. She opened it with a trembling hand, and read the following lines :

“ Most amiable and most beloved of
“ women,

“ I bid adieu to a country which is
“ dearer to me than any other ; I bid
“ adieu to the most faithful of friends ;
“ and last of all (my trembling hand will
“ scarce dictate the words) I bid adieu
“ to an object I love more than light or
“ life. Oh, my Ermina ! (do not now be
“ angry with me for the expression) the
“ pangs I feel at being separated for ever
“ from you cannot be equalled, and never
“ may I again endure the agonizing tor-
“ ture of this moment ! How often have
“ I ardently wished to throw myself at
“ your

“ your feet, and, pouring out the anguish
 “ of my soul, have implored your soothing
 “ pity ! But honour, and the fear that
 “ you would be disgusted with the passion
 “ of such a man as I am, made me restrain
 “ the ardour of my soul. Alas ! why
 “ were you not born an Indian maid ?
 “ then might I have wooed you, unre-
 “ strained, and happy in your love : care-
 “ less and gay, I would have roved
 “ through forest and grove, and pillaged
 “ all the sweets of nature to deck my
 “ beauteous bride, herself more fair,
 “ more lovely still ! But, why do I suf-
 “ fer my fancy to wander into these ideal
 “ visions of happiness, that only make the
 “ reality appear more horrid ? and cruel
 “ it is of me, knowing the sensibility of
 “ your angelic mind, to wound it by
 “ evincing the severity of my fate, and
 “ poignancy of my feelings. Yet, incon-
 “ siderate as you will perhaps deem me,
 “ I call every thing most sacred to wit-
 “ ness,

“ nefs, that never willingly from me
 “ fhould you have known that I loved,
 “ or rather adored you ; and it is only
 “ now, when my heart is rent with the
 “ moft bitter forrow, that I dare unbosom
 “ myfelf to your compaffion. And now,
 “ farewel for ever, my gentle and beauti-
 “ ful friend. May felicity be your lot,
 “ though mifery is mine ! may you be
 “ united to the man of your choice, but
 “ Linmore hopes he never fhall return to
 “ behold it.”

It was with many interruptions from
 tears, that Ermina perufed this letter, it
 being impoffible for her to do otherwife
 than regret, that an attachment fo sincere,
 fo delicate, and fo difinterefted, fhould be
 fo unfortunately placed, though ſhe en-
 deavoured to alleviate the pangs ſhe felt
 on his account, by indulging an idea that
 the different ſcenes in which he would
 be ſoon engaged, would greatly tend to
 obliterate

obliterate all remembrance of her. She could not resist comparing his noble conduct with that of most of the men of the present age, who seek merely the gratification of their own inclinations, without consulting the happiness or wishes of the object they pretend to love. I say *pretend*, because no man can be truly said to love a woman, who will not, for her felicity, sacrifice any selfish considerations of his own. But, alas! so pure and genuine a passion exists but rarely, though, for the honour of mankind, it does sometimes exist, but is chiefly to be found in novels and romances.

CHAPTER X.

Distrust and heaviness sit round my heart,
 And apprehension shocks my timorous soul.
 Why was not I laid in my peaceful grave
 With my poor parents, and at rest, as they are?
 Instead of that, I'm wand'ring into cares.

OTWAY.

ERMINA had never seen Lord Valancey since the night they met at the opera; though she wished it extremely, being interested in no common degree about him, more indeed than she ever recollected to have felt for any other stranger; but notwithstanding she continued to be frequently of Mrs. Ballendan's parties, and accompanied her to public places, she

never

him, till, unable to get the better of her curiosity, she at length ventured to ask that lady what was become of him, and learnt to her extreme chagrin that he had left town. She was quite angry with herself for feeling disappointed, at receiving this intelligence ; but his extraordinary behaviour at the opera had increased her anxiety to see him again.

One very fine day for that time of the year had tempted Mrs. Elizabeth Fairfield to drive to Hyde-park with Ermina, and two of her children. They had driven several times round the ring, when a carriage slowly passed them, in which sat a lady whom Miss Montrose immediately recognized for Mrs. Helderton ; and the sneer with which she regarded her, and the haughty toss of her head, was a convincing proof it was no other than herself. She felt rather mortified and con-
fused

fused at the contemptuous air with which she was regarded by her, as it confirmed her in the apprehension that she had suffered in the opinion of all her former friends, with none of whom she had been so fortunate hitherto as to meet with, except Mrs. Helderton; but whilst this circumstance pained her, on the other hand, she felt pleasure at discovering that she was out of mourning, and, from this appearance, flattered herself that Sir Charles was still alive. She hoped Mrs. Fairfield had not perceived the supercilious air and disdainful glances of Mrs. Helderton towards her, though she was afraid of it, from her having asked her if she knew that lady, which *mal à propos* question she had endeavoured to evade, as none of the family except Jeremiah and Kezia knew any part of her story. All the way returning home, she was silent and grave: for the sight of Mrs. Helderton had revived the remembrance
of

of past scenes of suffering, nor could she for the remainder of the day shake off a melancholy that depressed her spirits, and rendered her absent and inattentive to all that passed.

Trifling and of little consequence as this unexpected rencontre with Mrs. Helderthorn appeared, it was some days before Ermina could banish those disagreeable recollections, which the sight of her had revived in her mind; and dreading lest she should meet any more of the same party, prejudiced as she feared they were against her, she went out much seldomer than before, beginning secretly to wish that Jeremiah and Kezia would return to Hertfordshire. Of this she had some expectation, as spring was fast advancing, and she took advantage of every opportunity that offered to find fault with London, and praise the country, and would expatiate on the pleasure they should

should enjoy there on seeing the trees budding forth their bright green leaves, with the hawthorn hedges, and the orchards full of blossom. " Oh, my dear sir," she would say to Mr. Fairfield, " how I long to see your garden ! The borders will soon be filled with crocuses and snow-drops, and we shall shortly be enabled to gather nosegays of primroses, pansies, and violets." This little innocent artifice had the desired effect, and was pleasing to the good quakers, who preferred the country, and only came to London in the most dreary season, and to have the pleasure of seeing their children frequently, which they could not expect in the winter if they staid in Hertfordshire. They began therefore to seriously talk of returning to it, and Ermina was in high spirits at the idea, glad to exchange operas, routs, balls, and assemblies, for a walk by moonlight in some sequestered dell, and the vocal music of
the

the woods: happier to view the harmless vacant countenances of rural maid or swain, than those of fashionable beau or belle, in whose faces, emaciated by dissipation, pride, scorn, and ill-humour, are too frequently displayed.

But this dream of approaching peace and contentment, like many others which our poor heroine had formed, was interrupted, just as she had began to expect it would be realised. Mrs Elizabeth Fairfield, after having been out one morning to make some visits, came into the drawing-room, where Ermina was seated at work, and, rather abruptly, asked her, fixing her eyes with scrutiny on her face, if she knew a Sir Charles Melross. Confused at this unexpected question, Ermina blushed, and answered in the affirmative. "Hum," said Mrs. E. Fairfield, "I had hoped thee did not." Surprised, she asked the reason why; but the other

other replying, that perhaps it was of no consequence, the conversation ceased, as she said no more on the subject, and soon after left her. But Miss Montrose observed, that from the moment of her asking this question, she treated her with a freezing coldness, that hurt her exceedingly, as, till this period, she had ever been uniformly good-natured, attentive, and obliging, and (though not possessed of much understanding) had won Ermina's affection, by her constant good-humour.

For this alteration in Elizabeth Fairfield, which was imitated by her husband, Ermina could not account, any more than for many other extraordinary circumstances that had happened to her, and she endeavoured to console herself for the mortifying change, in the unaltered, affectionate kindness of Jeremiah and Kēzia Fairfield. But here, likewise, she

she met with an allay to the happiness
 she had formed for herself in their good-
 ness and fondness for her, as a gloom
 apparently hung over them, which, al-
 though it made no difference in their ten-
 derness towards her, she fancied (whilst
 she hoped she was mistaken) was con-
 nected with the cause that had lessened
 the friendship of their son and daughter.
 A week passed away, during which pe-
 riod their reserve and chilling civility
 seemed to increase rather than diminish,
 and feeling more comfortless than ever,
 to divert her mind (as Mrs. Ballendan
 had not called for the space of eight or
 nine days) she asked Mrs. E. Fairfield to
 lend her the carriage to pay her a morn-
 ing visit, or, if she was going out, she
 would thank her to set her down there.
 To this request she remained silent for
 some minutes, which Ermina imagining
 to proceed from an unwillingness to
 oblige her, said it was of no consequence,
 if

if it was not quite convenient, as she would take a hackney-coach. "Thee quite mistakes my silence, Ermina Montrose," replied Elizabeth, "it being caused by a repugnance to give thee pain, but which it is now impossible for me to avoid, as I should be sorry to have thee rudely repulsed from friend Ballendan's door; it is with reluctance, therefore, I tell thee that thou wilt never be admitted into her house again. The cause thou canst easily guess." At these words Ermina turned as pale as death, unable to utter a sentence; and, pitying her distress, the quaker rejoined, "Be assured I truly commiserate thy errors; for, left an orphan at such an early age, and exposed without a protector to the world, much allowance is to be made for thee, and I doubt not but thy faults are exaggerated." "Of what, madam, am I accused?" replied Ermina, recovering her spirits, "and who is my accuser? believe me,

me, though unfortunate, the most innocent of human beings." "Add not to thy offences, the crime of falsehood, Ermina Montrose," continued Elizabeth; "I have the best authority for the knowledge I have gained of thy ill conduct, and it would be wrong to bring the truth of people of honour in competition with the veracity of such a character as thine." Shocked beyond expression at being thus rudely addressed, and imagining it must be the same unknown enemy of her peace that always undermined her happiness and defamed her, Ermina had yet sufficient courage left to say, "It is of no avail, I find, to defend myself, as I see you are determined to disbelieve my asseverations of innocence and integrity; but surely you will place reliance on the assertions of your father and mother-in-law, the latter being fully acquainted with my whole story." "I have already spoken to them," replied the quaker, "and

“ and it has occasioned a misunderstanding between them, my husband, and myself ; for thy arts, of which I have been fully informed, have blinded them to believe any thing thou dost choose to advance. Verily, it was not well of Zemin Linmore to introduce his mistress under the roof of our respectable parents, whose ill-placed charity in protecting thee, must bring disgrace on all their family.” At the conclusion of this speech, which overwhelmed Ermina with horror and dismay, Elizabeth Fairfield walked majestically out of the room, leaving her to give vent to her suppressed tears, which now flowed in torrents from her weeping eyes. Upon reflection, she found herself necessitated to fly from the protection of Jeremiah and Kezia Fairfield, with whom from their warm affection for her she had hoped to pass the remainder of her eventful life. Again should she be obliged to wander through the world, a desolate

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wretched being ; for, could she endure by her presence any longer to destroy the harmony that had hitherto reigned in the happy family of the Fairfields, or bear to cause the disunion of a family that, till she entered it, enjoyed the purest felicity ? “ No, never,” she ejaculated, “ will I be so ungrateful ; rather let the severest misery be again my lot, than that I should sow dissensions in the breasts of my amiable benefactors, and their dearest relatives, and thus wound the hearts of those who cherished me when my mind was lacerated, and weakened by affliction.” Ardently did she wish that Zemin Linmore had remained in England, as he could have exculpated them both from the horrid construction put on their friendship, though she strove to console herself with the soothing idea, that Jeremiah and Kezia Fairfield yet judged her innocent ; and, wiping away her tears, she strove to compose her looks, that they

they might not be hurt (knowing their feelings) by the suspicion that she was unhappy.

She met them at dinner, and was so successful in her endeavours to hide the melancholy that oppressed her, that it escaped their observation, to her extreme satisfaction, as she had a twofold motive for wishing her sorrow to be disregarded, convinced, that if they knew of the severe indelicate censures of Elizabeth, it would render the breach still wider between them. When again left to the free indulgence of her thoughts, she formed numberless plans in her own mind about quitting her worthy friends, and what method she should afterwards pursue, but every one seemed so fraught with inconvenience, that they were rejected as fast as planned, and time passed away leaving her still undetermined. The next day Kezia, though ignorant of the

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cause,

cause, observing how pale she looked (for anxiety of mind had prevented her closing her eyes all night), requested Mrs. E. Fairfield to take her out for an airing with her, hoping it would be beneficial to her. Ermina saw it was very disagreeable to the latter to comply with this request, and she dared not herself decline going with her, without disclosing all that had passed to her worthy friend. The carriage was therefore ordered, and scarce a word was exchanged between them during their drive. As they were returning home, Mrs. E. Fairfield ordered the coachman to stop at a toy-shop in the Strand, and while looking at some toys that were brought to the coach for her to see, who should pass by, but Madame Dauseuille, who no sooner cast her eyes towards the carriage, than, as mortifications never come alone, she instantly recognised our luckless heroine, who no sooner perceived her than she shrunk back

back to avoid her observation. But it was too late, and the bold Frenchwoman marched up to the carriage, bawling out, " Mon Dieu, Miss Smith ! is it you ? I am glad to see you in a good situation. I suppose you are waiting-maid to this lady. Well, what is good for Jaques is not good for Nicole ; for I have had no one who has embroidered so neatly since, and if you quit your place shall be glad to employ you again." Ermina, almost dead with vexation, as she saw Mrs. E. Fairfield glancing at her with contempt, returned a very cold answer, which seemed to disappoint Madame Daufeuille, who expected she would express her gratitude for her proffered kindness ; but, no way rebuffed, she continued chatting with the utmost volubility, till at length, after a long conversation, to Ermina's great relief she took her leave, calling out as loud as she could, so that the servants could hear her, " Bon jour, Ma-

demoiselle Smith, bon jour, bon jour," and continued nodding her head till the carriage drove off. When she was out of sight, Ermina began explaining to Mrs. E. Fairfield her motive for assuming the name of Smith, but the latter, perceiving her intention, prevented her with these words: "I see thee art going to attempt thy justification, but, be convinced it is totally useless, as what I have now witnessed confirms the truth of all I have been told; and for thee to endeavour by any artful story to make thyself appear innocent, will be losing thy time and troubling thy invention to no purpose."

So undisguised an avowal of the contemptible light in which she held her, struck Ermina dumb; and finding it unavailing to contend with a mind thus illiberal, and completely warped by prejudice against her, she remained silent the

the remainder of the way home, indulging reflections on what method best to pursue, to escape from a roof where she was viewed with dislike and contempt, a contrast she could not endure after the kindness and respect with which she had been first treated. The numberless presents she had received from her friends Jeremiah and Kezia Fairfield, had occasioned her to make but a trifling encroachment on the fifty pounds they had given her, and nearly forty of it remained. With this sum she reflected she might support herself for a short time, till she had considered upon some plan by which to gain a subsistence, and if driven to any great distress, could apply to Madame Daufeuille, though she should be exceedingly averse to it, from a dislike she had imbibed to her manners; but she reflected, that when suffering from necessity, trifling objections must be overlooked. That she should adopt some

speedy plan for her removal, she found was absolutely necessary to the peace of her benefactors, and the next day, under pretence of going into the city a-shopping, she drove to Pall-mall, got out there, and walked to Duke-street, intending to take her old apartments, but to her extreme disappointment the whole of the house was let. She then proceeded in search of other lodgings, and at length fixed on a second floor in Norton-street, which she preferred to every other, from its proximity to her former landlady, Mrs. Brown. When she had taken the lodgings, she returned to her, requesting she would do her the favour to receive her baggage, which would come in a few days, and tell the persons who conveyed it that she was gone into the country she knew not where, and desired her things to be left under her care, till she returned, and that soon after she would in reality send for them herself. Mrs.

Brown

Brown promised faithfully to observe her instructions, and, with a heart somewhat lightened of its cares, from having decided what was to become of her, Ermina returned to Finsbury-square. She had determined very early the following morning, before any of the family were moving, to steal softly down stairs, and let herself out at the street-door, intending to leave a letter for Kezia Fairfield on her toilet. She could with difficulty restrain her tears when she took leave of her for the night, and when she reached her own chamber, she fastened the door, and indulged herself in weeping. When this emotion had subsided she opened her writing-desk, and composed a letter, in which she expressed her gratitude to Kezia (to whom the letter was addressed) for the obligations she had received from herself and Jeremiah Fairfield; obligations, she said, which would never be forgotten by her as long as she lived; and, should she ever

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have

her, she knew it was his general conduct to every woman, and consequently meant nothing.

He came in the evening according to his appointment, and mentioning to him what she had proposed, he gratified her by promising faithfully to obey her injunctions, without expressing any curiosity. Possessing an uncommon fund of wit, information, and good-humour, he chatted away in a manner so lively and agreeable, that, for the first time for some weeks, Ermina forgot her cares, and was completely amused. Having gained permission to see her again, he took his leave after passing several hours with her. From this period he frequently made her visits, would read to her when she sat at work, accompany her with his flute when she sung, and was sometimes her companion when she walked out, often making her hours, that would otherwise have been

been

been dull, pass swiftly away. But with all his good qualities (as human nature is never quite perfect), Devereux had one ridiculous failing, which, whilst Ermina lamented it, often afforded her the highest diversion. It was, the rage of seeming to be intimately acquainted with every body of rank and consequence; which weakness was the more extraordinary in him, as he was a young man of fashion, family, and fortune; and, when she walked with him, they never passed an elegant carriage, either with or without a coronet, but he was sure to bow as if he knew the persons in it. One morning when he had persuaded her to take a walk, at a little distance, approaching towards them, came two gentlemen exceedingly handsome, and of the most noble appearance. Ermina expressed her admiration of them, saying they had an air of elegance and fashion almost superior to any men she had ever seen.

Devereux

Devereux took no notice of this remark, but when they drew near, to her extreme surprise (as it would have been natural to have mentioned it, after what she had said, if he knew them), he bowed to them, which they only returned with a stare of astonishment, and passed on. When they were at a little distance, Devereux, pretending to be agitated with passion, as if much offended, exclaimed, "Oh, c——se it, hang it, that fellow means to cut me. By God I can't bear that: I suppose it is because he is with Lord George Cobham; but he may be assured for this, I'll have nothing more to say to him." With difficulty, Ermina composed her countenance at this scene, convinced he had never seen them before, merely affecting to be acquainted with them because they had been praised by her.

"I have something interesting to acquaint you with," said Devereux, coming
one

one day into Ermina's apartment with an open letter in his hand, " having just this moment heard from my aunt, Mrs. St. Austin, who is willing from my sole recommendation (for you see the high opinion she has of your humble servant), to take you as her companion. As you told me you wanted such a situation, I applied immediately to her, knowing she had lately parted with a young lady that lived with her for some time ; and she tells me that she shall expect you at St. Austin's-abbey, her country-seat, next week. I hope you will not think the distance too great ; for she lives in Cumberland, but comes to town once in two years, and I shall have the pleasure of seeing you before that period, it being my intention to visit the old lady in the autumn ; and I flatter myself you will be happy with her, as she is good-natured, though eccentric."

Ermina

Ermina began warmly to express her gratitude for this proof of his friendship, but he prevented her continuing the subject, by saying—"You are not, by Heaven, in the least obliged to me, as to serve you is doing myself a pleasure; though I must confess, I certainly do practise some self-denial, as I shall feel sorry to part with my little friend. However, I cannot now stay to talk about this affair, being engaged to-day with a party of bucks, who expect me every moment, and only called in for a minute to tell you of the situation offered, that in my absence you may come to a determination whether to accept it or not, and let me know when I see you again all about it, and if you intend going down next week." Having said this, he shook hands with her, and hurried away.

When he was gone, she reflected with pleasure and dawning hope on the respectable

spectable situation which, through the
 friendship and good-nature of Devereux,
 was offered for her acceptance, resolving
 to tell him when they met, that she had
 decided to go into Cumberland; a de-
 cision which she knew would please him,
 having frequently heard him mention
 Mrs. St. Austin with esteem, though she
 had no idea of the plan he had formed
 for her advantage. She felt quite re-
 lieved at the prospect of being soon
 rescued from the terrors of indigence,
 which she had always in view, and had
 no other method of averting till this for-
 tunate event, but by applying to the dis-
 gusting Madame Daufeuille; a plan to
 which she felt so unaccountably averse,
 that she had every day delayed it, from
 the hope (which was now happily realif-
 ed) that something might happen to ren-
 der it quite unnecessary.

Devereux learnt, when he saw her
 again,

again, that she had decided to live with his aunt, and his satisfaction was extreme at having been useful to her; and a few evenings previous to her quitting London he persuaded her, which he never could do before, to let him accompany her to the play, as her favourite comedy of *The Wonder* was to be acted. Great as she considered her obligations to him, she had not resolution to refuse so trifling a favour, and as no entertainment was so agreeable to her as a play, from having been so long deprived of that pleasure, she received the highest gratification, and was chatting to her companion between the acts with some of her native vivacity, when, accidentally casting her eyes round the house, she perceived, to her extreme consternation, Mrs. Helderton and another lady of a most unprepossessing appearance, looking at her with a sneer on their countenances, and talking at the same time, apparently about her, to a gentleman

gentleman who seemed very much interested in what they said. This induced her to look at him attentively, and she thought she knew his figure, but his face she could not distinguish, as he leant with his back towards her against one of the pillars of the box. Suddenly, however, he turned round to seat himself by Mrs. Helderton, and, overcome with joy, surprise, and terror, Ermina felt ready to faint, when their eyes at the same moment meeting, she discovered the man whom she had so long regretted, whom she fancied to be wandering, forlorn, unhappy, and anxious for her fate, far from his native country, to be now before her; for it was indeed Lord Henry, who had been conversing with Mrs. Helderton and the other lady.

The pleasure, mingled with various emotions, which she had felt at beholding him, was damped by seeing him in
such

such company, and at observing the stern haughty air with which he regarded her, and which seemed to please his companions, who often looked at her, and then tittered and laughed behind their fans. This behaviour, added to the resentment she felt at his not flying instantly to her, after what she had suffered for his sake, sustained her spirits, and his present society assisted the effort ; for she was determined, whatever were her feelings, not to let them perceive that she endured a pang of regret for his neglect. She therefore continued conversing with Devereux with apparent gaiety, and had a little rallied her spirits, when an unusual tremor again pervaded her frame, on seeing him level his opera-glass at Lord Henry Beauchamp and his party, as she dreaded lest the latter should imagine she had prompted him to do so on purpose to insult them. “ I think those ladies are in luck to-night,” said Devereux,

Devereux, "to have such a fine dashing fellow to escort them here. I am sure I know his face about town, he's certainly somebody of consequence. I wonder he should notice those women, who have neither beauty or elegance to recommend them to the observation of any man of taste, and they look confoundedly cross into the bargain." Ermina's heart fluttered as he spoke, and she looked towards the stage, not daring to glance towards Lord Henry, still fearful he might misconstrue the staring of her companion; as what she had already suffered made her dread lest a quarrel should take place between him and any gentleman under whose protection she was, and she repented going to the play, though she could never have dreamt of seeing him there. Her agitation was relieved a few minutes after, by seeing Lord Henry quit the box, but not till he had first given her a glance of scorn, as, notwithstanding all

VOL. II. N her

her efforts, her eyes involuntarily turned to the place where he sat.

She felt much relieved at his absence, as she could now, without appearing influenced by his disdainful looks, quit the theatre sooner than she had intended. Complaining of fatigue, for the false spirits that had supported her having fled with his presence, and left her spiritless and unhappy, she requested to return home before the play was finished, and was accompanied by Devereux, who, imputing her apparent indisposition to illness of body rather than of mind, shewed her all the affectionate attention of a brother. When at liberty to reflect on the conduct of Lord Henry, she felt keener resentment against him than she could ever have thought it possible for her to feel for any person, particularly one who had so often vowed his affection for her was interwoven with his existence; and, who,
till

till this interview, had been tenderly beloved by her; time, absence, nor other lovers having had power to shake her fidelity. Yet mingled with the pain his incomprehensible behaviour had inflicted in her gentle bosom, she enjoyed an exquisite satisfaction in the certainty, that the information she had received concerning the death of Sir Charles was without foundation, as otherwise his rival could not so publicly appear in London. How sincerely did she regret the loss she had sustained in the alienated affections of Melross, whose faith and truth were so much more valuable than the fickle passion of Lord Henry; and she began to be convinced in her own mind, that wounded pride, rather than love, made him betray such evident emotion at the probability of her marriage with another. She regretted bitterly, that he should have prevented an union in which the greatest

STOM

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felicity

felicity would most probably have been
 her lot, whilst, on the contrary, with Lord
 Henry true happiness could not be ex-
 pected, convinced from the character of
 Lord Darlington, that he would never re-
 concile himself to a match where the lady
 was destitute of fortune; and as he was
 entirely dependent on his father, ruin and
 misery must have inevitably ensued, and
 been their portion for his disobedience.
 She even worked up her imagination to
 a belief, that the story he had told her at
 their last interview in Devonshire, was a
 fabrication to exculpate himself, his neg-
 lect of her having in reality been occa-
 sioned by an inconstancy of disposition;
 and that, capricious to excess, his maturer
 judgment rejected the imprudent (in point
 of pecuniary considerations) and romantic
 love that influenced him when younger.
 These conjectures fortified her bosom with
 increasing resentment, and she resolved no
 more

more to think with tenderness of a man, whose conduct was as cruel as it was inexplicable.

Ermina's heart swelled with gratitude towards the generous and noble-minded Devereux, and when, previous to the commencement of her journey, she bade him farewell, the most grateful and artless expressions of esteem for his goodness to her fell from her lips. Affected by the gratitude she evinced, he kissed her hand, saying, " You estimate too highly, my sweet friend, the trifling service I have rendered you, but be assured you shall ever find me a sincere friend and protector, and I hope, on every emergency, you will condescend to apply to me." Ermina gave him the sweetest smile of approbation for this additional proof of his kindness, and tears of sensibility moistened her eyes, as he conducted her to the carriage, where

where they again bade each other an affectionate adieu, and parted.

As she pursued her solitary route to Cumberland, her soul saddened as it called to remembrance the felicity she had lost since she had been driven by an inexorable destiny from the peaceful cottage of her parents, that had been so many years the abode of purest happiness. She recollected with regret, how often her beloved father had pointed out to her the dangers of the world, which she had since fatally and frequently experienced to be but too just, secretly breathing an ardent wish, that it might, at some future period, be in her power to return to that happy retreat, where she might again enjoy serenity, interrupted only by the softened recollection of past scenes. Of all her friends, none remained but the worthy Madelaine, not daring to address herself to

to any other, knowing that the false representations which had been made of her conduct, must have forfeited her their friendship. But, though doubting not the continuance of the esteem and sympathizing pity of the good nun, to whom she disclosed every event of her life, she was yet chagrined at having had but one letter from her, after being obliged to leave Lady Assop's protection; and she had received no answers to several which she had written, desiring Madelaine to direct for her at Mrs. Brown's, under the name of Smith. She feared her venerable friend was either ill or dying, from this circumstance, as not any thing she was convinced would prevent her writing to the child of her fondest affections, as she usually styled her. To remove the anxiety she felt for her fate, she had written the superior to request she would relieve her fears, and send her a letter at St. Austin's-abbey, where she intended to go by her own
name,

name, resolving never more to assume a fictitious appellation, as she disliked deception of every description, preferring to suffer the severest calamities of fortune, rather than once more assume an appearance of mystery, that had, and probably would again authorise any future insults, which misfortune and virtuous poverty are certain to meet from the proud, unprincipled, and unfeeling, who form, and it may be pronounced with truth and regret, by far the principal part of mankind.

10 JU 68

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

T. Davison,
White-Friars.

